

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES



3 3433 06827316 2

THE
RESURRECTION

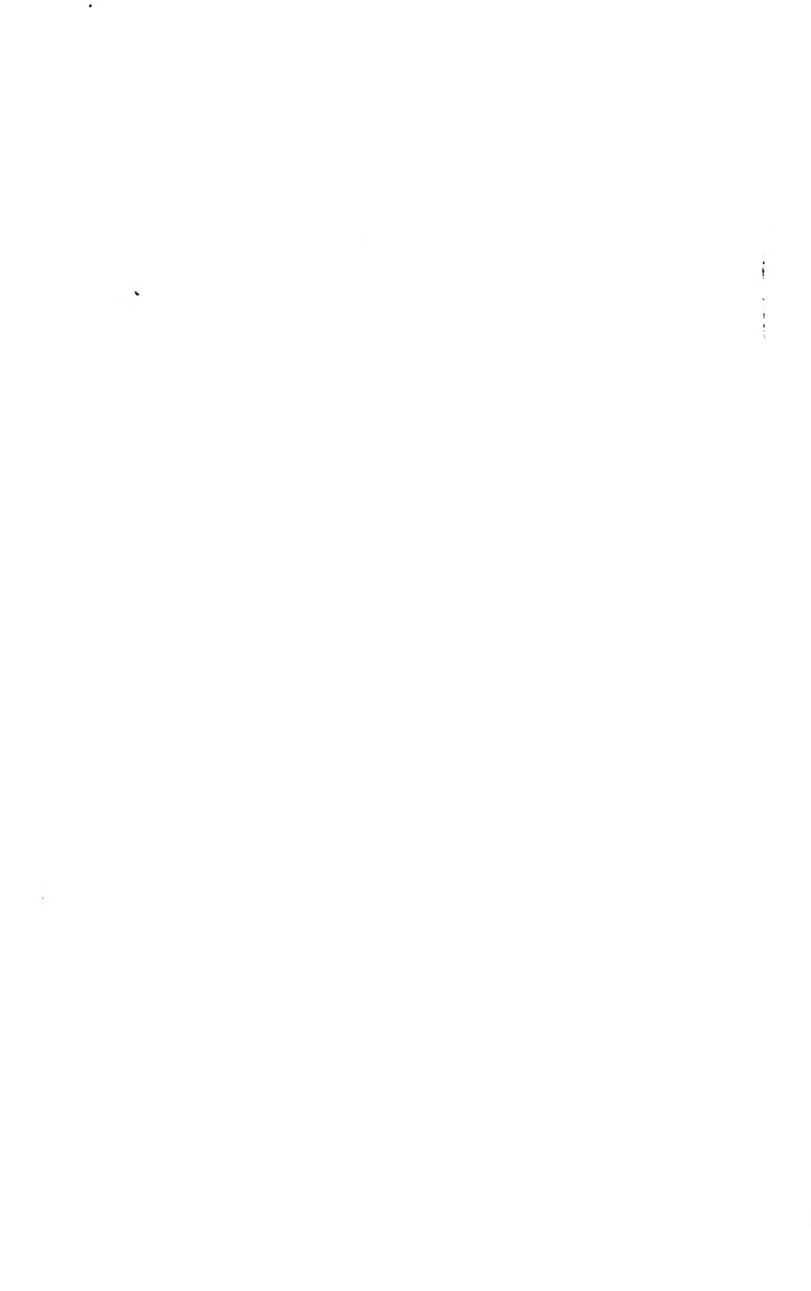
ALEXANDER MACLAREN

1. Seemans.

AFTER THE RESURRECTION

1826-100

Z 1 Z
McLaren



AFTER THE RESUR-
RECTION, AND
OTHER ADDRESSES.

By the Rev. *ALEXANDER MACLAREN*, D.D.

NEW YORK
AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY,
150 NASSAU STREET

Σ 19032
BIL

THE
P
148979B

CONTENTS

	PAGE
TOUCH ME NOT	1
THE DENIER ALONE WITH HIS LORD	15
THE TRAVELLERS TO EMMAUS	28
THE RISEN LORD'S CHARGE AND GIFT	40
THOMAS AND JESUS	52
THE SEA AND THE BEACH	65
LOVEST THOU ME?	77
DOING AND TARRYING	89

C.D. TRANSFER SEP 23 1941

	PAGE
ON THE MOUNTAIN	102
THE ASCENSION	116
RISEN WITH CHRIST	130
WHAT PASSES AND WHAT ABIDES	142
A THREEFOLD DISEASE AND A TWOFOLD CURE	156
THE DIVINE IDEAL OF SALVATION	170
THE SERVANT LORD AND THE LORD'S SERVANT	182
THE BOY IN THE TEMPLE	193
THE TEACHING GOD AND HIS SCHOLARS	203
IN MEMORIAM : QUEEN VICTORIA	213
CHRIST'S IDEAL OF A MONARCH	219

CONTENTS

vii

	PAGE
PATIENCE, HOPE, PEACE	229
TRUE ZEAL	241
GO INTO PEACE	249
HIDING AND NOT HIDING	258
THE KING WITH TEN THOUSAND.	267
A GREAT QUESTION AND A PLAIN ANSWER.	281
GOD'S VOICE AND MAN'S ECHO	291

Touch Me Not

Jesus saith unto her, Touch Me not ; for I am not yet ascended to My Father,—JOHN xx. 17.

THESE are the first words of the risen Christ ; they strike one as being singularly cold and repellent at such a time. Their immediate purpose was to put a barrier between Himself and Mary's clasping hands. It was not like Him to repress tokens of love, or to chill hearts. He had let a much worse woman than Mary Magdalene wash His feet with tears, and wipe them with the hairs of her head. At such a meeting, after such a parting, a little exuberance of demonstration might have been permitted, and forgiven even if it had been excessive.

The prohibition, strange as it sounds, was followed by a reason which sounds even more strangely : "Touch Me not ; for I have not yet ascended." We might have expected that the first "not" would have been left out, "Touch Me ; for I have not yet ascended,"—would have been intelligible, as suggesting that for a little time still such tokens of love were possible,

ere the great separation came. Mary must have been as much bewildered by the reason as she must have been chilled by the prohibition. And yet both were meant to lead her, with gentle, loving, and yet most firm hand, to recognise the new relation which had begun, and was henceforth to continue. They said to her, "old things have passed away, all things have become new," and though thou hast "known Christ after the flesh ; yet now henceforth " thou shalt "know Him " so "no more." They were not meant for Mary only. All the Resurrection histories have a forward look, and were intended to explain directly to the disciples, and more remotely to us, the essential nature of that new relationship into which His disciples have entered, and in which they now continue, to their Lord. These teachings, whether expressed in words or in the facts of our Lord's appearances, are the lesson-book for the Church "till He come," and if we understand the bearings of these we have enough to direct and to sustain us. We have, then, to deal with the three points here ; the touch that was forbidden ; the touch that is possible because Christ has ascended ; and the lessons for to-day that come from both.

Then let us think of

I. THE TOUCH THAT WAS FORBIDDEN.

Now the prohibition which, as I have said, sounds at first repellent and cold, can only be understood

if we grasp firmly and see clearly the mood and character of the person to whom it was addressed. And so I venture to turn to the circumstances that precede these words, not with any foolish idea of telling over again the story that John has told for all time, but only for the sake of bringing out what his narrative shows us of the disposition of Mary.

I would only make one remark in passing, which is, that if this episode is not the simple recounting of historical facts, the man that wrote it must have been one of the greatest imaginative geniuses that the world ever saw. If it is not history, I would match the story of Mary and the Lord on the resurrection morning, for subtlety of characterisation, for exquisite beauty, for reticence, for simplicity that goes straight to the heart, against anything that a Shakespeare or a Dante ever wrote.

But, passing altogether from that, let me just recall to you the points bearing on Mary's mood. She had been to the grave once already, found it empty, rushed away to Peter and John with the lament which henceforward became a kind of cuckoo-note on her lips, and filled her whole heart: "They have taken away the Lord; we know not where they have laid Him." The two apostles ran to the tomb. She seems to have come, not with them, but after them. Manlike, they satisfied themselves

of the fact and went away. Womanlike, she hung about the place, useless, unable to tear herself from it, and yet, since the grave was empty, having no reason for staying. So, utterly absorbed in her grief, she stands there, looks into the tomb, sees the two angels as though she did not see, listlessly looks at them, and is not surprised to see them. What were angels or anything to a woman with such a grief in her heart? They ask her a question which, if she had been less swallowed up in her sorrow, she would have discerned as being a veiled offer of help. We do not inquire of people why they weep unless we have sympathy that would like to dry their tears. But she does not hear the kindness in their question, and listlessly gives them the old answer with a little difference. She had said to Peter and John, "They have taken away the Lord"; she says to the angels, "They have taken away *my* Lord." Her grief was beginning to be selfish. She was not thinking about what other people had lost, but about her possession of Him and her own desolation. Further, she was clinging despairingly to the bodily form. That form was what she meant by "my Lord," and the same identification or confusion of the person with the physical frame, runs through all her words. She speaks of it as Him, over and over again.

Then, wearily impatient of the vain talk with these two who had not touched her heart nor her

wonder, she mechanically turns herself round, and "всё Jesus standing" not coming. He was there; how He had come there no one knows. She does not recognise Him. That does not necessarily involve any change in Him. Whether there was or not is a large question that I am not going to touch. The hypothesis that there was is not needed to explain Mary's non-recognition. She looked at Him with the same listless eyes with which she had contemplated the angels; the same listless look with which I dare say most of us, in our times of sorrow, have looked at the vain shadow that pass before us. "The gardener" was the natural person to be there, at that hour in the morning. So the one dominant thought rises again: "If thou hadst taken Him away, tell me where thou hadst laid Him." And then, forgetting the weakness of a woman's arm, in the strength of a woman's love, she says: "I will bear Him away." She turned from Him listless, self-absorbed in her grief, passionately clinging to the outward form, hopeless. And then came the one word of revelation, "Mary!" fancy the evidence in it and the one word of recognition into which her whole soul flings itself in a swift rapture: "Rabboni! Master!" Who could *imagine* that?

But that exclamation shows the weakness as well as the strength of her faith, the inadequacy as well as the warmth of her conception of Jesus Christ.

It is the old name, never recurring after the resurrection except this one time. It is the old name, which she would fain have lifted across the gulf, and in it there speaks her recognition only of the Christ that had been, and not of the Christ that was then, and is to be in future. We must suppose what the evangelist does not record, because there was no need to tell it, that, in the sudden impulse of a woman's heart, when all these smoky elements of which I have been speaking, listlessness and absorbing sorrow and hopelessness, had caught fire and blazed up into a flame, she made some eager movement to clasp Him, and make sure of Him.

Then came the beginning of the educational process, only explicable if you take all that I have been trying to sketch into account. "Touch Me not ; for I have not yet ascended." What was the touch that was forbidden? On that very morning other women were permitted to clasp His feet. On that very evening He said to the apostles, "handle Me and see." A week after He said to the doubter, "Reach hither thy hand. Thrust it into My side." Why were these permitted that, which to Mary was forbidden? For this simple reason, that that attempt to clasp Him was the expression of a love and a faith which unduly clung to the external form, and which desired to perpetuate the vanished relationship. And so our Lord began the educational process, then and there ;

and it is going on to this hour, to teach us, as it taught her, that "the Spirit quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing," and that the ascended Christ is to be grasped in another and a better fashion than with the clutch of clinging hands around the "blessed feet" that trod the plains of Galilee,

And were nailed
For our advantage, to the bitter cross.

Let me turn now in the second place to the consideration of

II. THE TOUCH THAT IS POSSIBLE BY REASON OF THE ASCENSION.

"Touch Me not ; for I have not yet ascended," that implies in all plainness and obviousness, "if I had ascended you might touch." And it points us onwards and inwards to the true meaning of Christ's ascension, to the true meaning of presence and absence in relation to Him, and to the true mode of union with Him, by the communion that is possible through faith and love, aspiration and obedience. Now let me begin by reminding you of what is a parallel, though an inadequate one, in the fact that, for us all, death and distance have a transforming, elevating effect upon our thoughts of those who, when they were beside us, did not seem to us so sweet, so great as now, when they are withdrawn from us. Though we entertain angels unawares many

a time, it needs that they should wing their way into the native haven, before we see how white the wings and how fair the faces. Distance heightens the mountains, because it dwindles the knolls ; and many a man that has lived amongst his fellows unrecognised contradicts all laws of perspective, and becomes greater as he recedes from us. Thus you will find that, as a matter of history, it was the resurrection and the ascension of Jesus Christ that elevated the apostolic conceptions of Him, and that the flesh had been indeed, though a means of revelation, also a veil. It was so hard to believe that He with whom they ate and drank all the time that He went in and out amongst them was the Son of God. It was so hard to believe that He who was so kindly with His kind was yet something other than His kind. It needed the commentary of the open grave, and the glory-cloud hiding Him from their view, and of the Pentecost which was the issue of both, to teach these men who it was that had been walking amongst them. That resurrection and ascension have, in like manner, been the schoolmasters of the Church ever since, to teach it how to interpret the earthly life by the heavenly glory.

But there is another thought to be taken into account besides the consideration that, as is the case with others, though in an infinitely higher degree—the withdrawal of the earthly reveals the heavenly

that conscated through the earthly. We believe, as Scripture teaches, that Christ's visible ascension was but the symbol for our sight of a far more than material change, of the passage of His humanity into the glory of the Father; and that as a New Testament writer puts it: "He hath ascended up, far above all heavens, that He might fill all things." We misunderstand altogether the meaning of the ascension, if we regard it as being a change of place. It is not a leaving of the earth, but it is a passing into the heavens, that He might more fully, and for ever, dwell with us on earth. Matthew and another evangelist have no word to say about the ascension, and that is not because it did not come within their circle of belief, but because it followed so closely and necessarily upon the resurrection, and because it was the indispensable basis (not needing to be stated, but taken for granted) of continued presence. It does not mean Christ's withdrawal from us, but it means the possibility of Christ's presence with us, in higher and nobler fashion; and so it is precisely the evangelist who does not tell the fact, who gives us its issue in the great promise: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." If, then, we would rightly understand what that ascension to the Father means, we must take the teaching that is implied here, and recognise that it is a step towards, not the absence of the Lord from His

people, but the continual presence of the Lord with His people.

Such being the true meaning of ascension, such being the true meaning of presence (and it is a central Christian truth that Jesus Christ is, in no metaphor, with every one that trusts in His name), look at the light that is cast upon the true way of clasping and clutching Him. "Touch Me not ; for I have not yet ascended—" Mary's grasp, loving as it is, on those feet, sacred as they are, is less real than the clasp with which faith and love hold on to Him, and make Him their very own. By believing and by loving we grapple Him to our hearts with hooks of steel, and keep Him there as nothing else can. And the resulting unity is so deep, so sweet, so lifting in its results, so altogether blessed, as no outward possession could ever be. There is nothing to envy in those who companied with Him all the time that He was here on earth. They had less than you and I may have.

One way by which we can clasp and hold Him, and hold Him fast, is very significantly suggested by the subsequent words of our Lord to Mary, "Touch Me not ; . . . but go and tell My brethren." To do His errands and to spread His name is one of the best of the ways by which we can be in continual touch with the dear Lord. He Himself said, "If a man love Me he will keep My words, and My Father will

love him, and We will come and make our abode with him." "Touch Me not ; for I have not yet ascended," is convertible, by leaving out the two "nots," into the great privilege and duty of all Christians, "Touch Me ; for I have ascended."

Lastly, there are

III. LESSONS FOR TO-DAY FLOWING RICHLY FROM THIS INCIDENT.

I gather them into a sentence or two.

Here is a lesson for love that clings to earth. We all gravitate downwards, and need to be exhorted to set our affections on things above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. The old watchword of the Church, "*Sursum corda*"—Up with your hearts—is based upon the whole course of thoughts involved in these words of my text. If I might take such a metaphor, just as some great silken globe inflated with a lighter gas, and rising towards the skies, may draw after it a set of heavy packages which only rise by being lashed to it ; so the risen Christ lifts us, if we touch Him, to where He is, and we sit at the right hand of God in the heavenly places. To touch Christ loosens our fetters and bears us aloft.

Here is a lesson for hearts that sorrow. Poor Mary clung, as we all do, in our weakness, to the earthly form, and the dear old days, that she longed to perpetuate. She was taught that, though the old

days were gone, better days were coming ; and though the old form was to be withdrawn, a deeper union was possible. To her might have been addressed the consolation, "Perhaps He therefore departed from thee for a season that thou mightest receive Him for ever." And some of us may find consolation in the same thought, and in believing that, as with this clinging woman and her dear Christ, so it may be with us and our loved and lost ones—that we are parted from them in the flesh that we might possess them in the spirit.

Here is a lesson for faith that makes too much of externals. There is a type of Christian love very genuine, but far too sentimental, and far too sensuous, and it needs to be reminded that the highest and the deepest love should have in it a consciousness of the separation, as well as of the union, and should not so much be seeking to clasp the feet as to receive the spirit of Jesus. I do not need to say here how the true conception of what Christ's presence to the Church after the ascension is, gives the real answer to that materialised notion of a Real Presence, as consisting in the magical substitution, by priestly efficacy, of the body of Jesus Christ for the bread of the communion. I am not going to speak of that. I do not suppose I am speaking to Roman Catholics. But if you desire to be delivered from all undue dependence on externals ponder my text,

“Touch Me not ; for I have not yet ascended”—touch Me as ascended. And be quite sure of this, that to have Christ’s presence in your heart is to have a far more real, and a far more blessed presence, than to see Him on the altar, or to place Him within your lips.

Now, dear brethren, contrast the warmth and closeness of the relation which thousands of men and women, in this as in every generation, bear to that Christ, with the tepid emotion and far-off admiration which follow all other great names of the world. Every one of them, founders of religions and all, drift away further and further into the mist, become more ghostly as the centuries are piled up between us and them, and their influence diminishes. But to-day, all over the world, there are men and women whose love to Jesus Christ is the warmest emotion in their hearts, and whose closeness to Him is closer than that by which they adhere to husband, to wife, to child. Why is that? Because He, a venerable figure far away back in the past, did something nineteen hundred years ago, the benefit of which comes down to us to-day, upon the stream of time? No ; but because He died indeed, but lives, and is with us, and that to bless us. He has not left the world, though He has ascended to the Father, any more than He left the Father when He came into the world. We can sit with Him in the heavenly

places, and He comes and works with us in the earthly places. So let us set our hearts upon Him, and trusting in Him we shall find that He is nearer to us than ourselves, and that the ascended Christ is the present Christ whom we can grasp in the only true clasp that knits spirit to spirit by the hands of faith and love. He has ascended, therefore we can touch Him, as they could not who companied with Him while He was here among men.

The Denier Alone with his Lord

The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.—
LUKE xxiv. 34.

THE other appearances of the risen Lord to individuals on the day of Resurrection are narrated with much particularity, and at considerable length. John gives us the lovely account of our Lord's conversation with Mary Magdalene, Luke gives us in full detail the story of the interview with the two travellers on the road to Emmaus. Here is another appearance, known to "the eleven, and them that were with them" on the Resurrection evening, and enumerated by Paul in his list of the appearances of the Lord, the account of which was the common gospel of himself and all the others, and yet deep silence is preserved in regard to it. No word escaped Peter's lips as to what passed in the conversation between the denier and his Lord. That is very significant.

The other appearances of the risen Lord to individuals on the day of Resurrection suggest their

own reasons. He appeared first to Mary Magdalene because she loved much. The love that made a timid woman brave, and the sorrow that filled her heart, to the exclusion of everything else, drew Jesus to her. The two on the road to Emmaus were puzzled, honest, painful seekers after truth. It was worth Christ's while to spend hours of that day of Resurrection in clearing questioning and sincere minds. Does not this other appearance explain itself? The brief spasm of cowardice and denial had changed into penitence when the Lord looked, and the bitter tears that fell were not only because of the denial, but because of the wound of that sharp arrow, the poisoned barb of which we are happy if we have not felt the thought—"He will never know how ashamed and miserable I am; and His last look was reproach, and I shall never see His face any more." To respond to, and to satisfy, love, to clear and to steady thought, to soothe the agony of a penitent, were worthy works for the risen Lord. I venture to think that such a record of the use of such a day bears historical truth on its very face, because it is so absolutely unlike what myth-making or hallucination, or the excited imagination of enthusiasts would have produced, if these had been the sources of the story of the Resurrection. But apart from that, I wish in this sermon to try to gather the suggestions that come to us from this interview,

and from the silence which is observed concerning them.

With regard to—

I. THE FACT OF THE APPEARANCE ITSELF.

We can only come into the position rightly to understand its precious significance, if we try to represent to ourselves the state of mind of the man to whom it was granted. I have already touched upon that; let me, in the briefest possible way, recapitulate. As I have said, the momentary impulse to the cowardly crime passed, and left a melted heart, true penitence, and profound sorrow. One sad day slowly wore away. Early on the next came the message which produced an effect upon Peter so great, that the gospel, which in some sense is his gospel (I mean that “according to Mark”) alone contains the record of it—the message from the open grave: “Tell My disciples *and Peter* that I go before you into Galilee.” There followed the sudden rush to the grave, when the feet made heavy by a heavy conscience were distanced by the light step of happy love, and “the other disciple did outrun Peter.” The more impulsive of the two dashed into the sepulchre, just as he afterwards threw himself over the side of the boat, and floundered through the water to get to his Lord’s feet, whilst John was content with looking, just as he afterwards was content to sit in the boat and say, “It is the Lord.” But John’s

faith, too, outran Peter's, and he departed "believing," whilst Peter only attained to go away "wondering." And so another day wore away, and at some unknown hour in it, Jesus stood before Peter alone.

What did that appearance say to the penitent man? Of course, it said to him what it said to all the rest, that death was conquered. It lifted his thoughts of his Master. It changed his whole atmosphere from gloom to sunshine, but it had a special message for him. It said that no fault, no denial, bars or diverts Christ's love. Peter, no doubt, as soon as the hope of the Resurrection began to dawn upon him, felt fear contending with his hope, and asked himself, "If He is risen, will He ever speak to me again?" And now here He is with a quiet look on His face that says, "Notwithstanding thy denial, see, I have come to thee."

Ah! brethren, the impulsive fault of a moment, so soon repented of, so largely excusable, is far more venial than many of our denials. For a continuous life in contradiction to our profession is a blacker crime than a momentary fall, and they who, year in and year out, call themselves Christians, and deny their profession by the whole tenor of their lives, are more deeply guilty than was the apostle. But Jesus Christ comes to us, and no sin of ours, no denial of ours, can bar out His lingering, His reproachful, and yet His restoring, love and grace.

All sin is inconsistent with the Christian profession. Blessed be God ; we can venture to say that no sin is incompatible with it, and none bars off wholly the love that pours upon us all. True ; we may shut it out. True ; so long as the smallest or the greatest transgression is unacknowledged and unrepented, it forms a nonconducting medium around us, and isolates us from the electric touch of that gracious love. But also true ; it is there hovering around us, seeking an entrance. If the door be shut, still the knocking finger is upon it, and the great heart of the Knocker is waiting to enter. Though Peter had been a denier, because he was a penitent the Master came to him. No fault, no sin, cuts us off from the love of our Lord.

And then the other great lesson, closely connected with this, but yet capable of being treated separately for a moment, which we gather from the fact of the interview, is that Jesus Christ is always near the sorrowing heart that confesses its evil. He knew of Peter's penitence, if I might so say, in the grave ; and, therefore, risen, His feet hastened to comfort and to soothe him. As surely as the shepherd hears the bleat of the lost sheep in the snowdrift, as surely as the mother hears the cry of her child, so surely is a penitent heart a magnet which draws Christ, in all His potent fulness and tenderness, to itself. He that heard and knew the tears of the

denier, and his repentance, when in the dim regions of the dead, no less hears and knows the first faint beginnings of sorrow for sin, and bends down from His seat on the right hand of God, saying, "I dwell in the high and holy place, with Him also that is of a humble and contrite spirit, to revive the spirit of the contrite, and to revive the heart of the humble lives." No fault bars Christ's love. Christ is ever near the penitent spirit; and whilst he is yet a great way off, He has compassion, and runs and falls on his neck and kisses him.

Now let us look at—

II. THE INTERVIEW OF WHICH WE KNOW NOTHING.

We know nothing of what did pass; we know what must have passed. There is only one way by which a burdened soul can get rid of its burden. There is only one thing that a conscience-stricken denier can say to his Saviour. And—blessed be God!—there is only one thing that a Saviour can say to a conscience-stricken denier. There must have been penitence with tears; there must have been full absolution and remission. And so we are not indulging in baseless fancies when we say that we know what passed in that conversation, of which no word ever escaped the lips of either party concerned. So then, with that knowledge, just let me dwell upon one or two considerations suggested.

One is that the consciousness of Christ's love,

uninterrupted by our transgression, is the mightiest power to deepen penitence and the consciousness of unworthiness. Do you not think that when the apostle saw in Christ's face, and heard from His lips, the full assurance of forgiveness, he was far more ashamed of himself than he had ever been in the hours of bitterest remorse? So long as there blends with the sense of my unworthiness any doubt about the free, full, unbroken flow of the Divine love to me, my sense of my own unworthiness is disturbed. So long as with the consciousness of demerit there blends that thought—which often is used to produce the consciousness, viz., the dread of consequences, the fear of punishment—my consciousness of sin is disturbed. But sweep away fear of penalty, sweep away hesitation as to the Divine love, then I am left face to face with the unmingled vision of my own evil, and ten thousand times more than ever before do I recognise how black my transgression has been; as the prophet puts it with profound truth, "Thou shalt be ashamed and confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy sins, when I am pacified towards Thee for all that Thou hast done." If you would bring a man to know how bad he is, do not brandish a whip before his face, or talk to him about an angry God. You may bray a fool in a mortar, and his foolishness will not depart from him. You may

break a man down with these violent pestles, and you will do little more. But get him, if I may continue the metaphor, not into the mortar, but set him in the sunshine of the Divine love, and that will do more than break ; it will melt the hardest heart that no pestle would do anything but triturate. The great evangelical doctrine of full and free forgiveness through Jesus Christ produces a far more vital, vigorous, transforming recoil from transgression than anything besides. "Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid! Yea, we establish the law."

Then, further, another consideration may be suggested, and that is that the acknowledgment of sin is followed by immediate forgiveness. Do you think that when Peter turned to his Lord, who had come from the grave to soothe him, and said, "I have sinned," there was any pause before He said, "and thou art forgiven"? The only thing that keeps the Divine love from flowing into a man's heart is the barrier of unforgiven, because unrepented, sin. So soon as the acknowledgment of sin takes away the barrier—of course, by a force as natural as gravitation—the river of God's love flows into the heart. The consciousness of forgiveness may be gradual ; the fact of forgiveness is instantaneous. And the consciousness may be as instantaneous as the fact, though it often is not. "I believe in the forgiveness of sins";

and I believe that a man, that you, may at one moment be held and bound by the chains of sin, and that at the next moment, as when the angel touched the limbs of this very apostle in prison, the chains may drop from off the ankles and wrists, and the prisoner may be free to follow the angel into light and liberty. Sometimes the change is instantaneous, and there is no reason why it should not be an instantaneous change, experienced at this moment by any man or woman within these walls. Sometimes it is gradual. The Arctic spring comes with a leap, and one day there is thick-ribbed ice, and a few days after there are grass and flowers. A like swift transformation is within the limits of possibility for any of us, and—Blessed be God!—within the experience of a good many of us. There is no reason why it should not be that of each of us, as well as of this apostle.

Then there is one other thought that I would suggest, viz., that the man who is led through consciousness of sin and experience of uninterrupted love which is forgiveness, is thereby led into a higher and a nobler life. Peter's bitter fall, Peter's gracious restoration, were no small part of the equipment which made him what we see him in the days after Pentecost—when the coward that had been ashamed to acknowledge his Master, and all whose impulsive and self-reliant devotion passed away before a flippant

servant-girl's tongue, stood before the rulers of Israel, and said : " Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye ! " The sense of sin, the assurance of pardon, shatter a man's unwholesome self-confidence, and develop his self-reliance based upon his trust in Jesus Christ. The consciousness of sin, and the experience of pardon, deepen and make more operative in life the power of the Divine love. Thus, the publicans and the harlots do go into the Kingdom of God many a time before the Pharisees. So let us all be sure that even our sins and faults may be converted into stepping-stones to higher things.

Lastly, notice

III. THE DEEP SILENCE IN WHICH THIS INTERVIEW IS SHROUDED.

I have already pointed to the occupations of that Resurrection day as bearing on their face the marks of veracity. It seems to me that if the story of the Resurrection is not history, the talk between the denier and the Master would have been a great deal too tempting a subject for romancers of any kind to have kept their hands off. If you read the apocryphal gospels you will see how eager they are to lay hold of any point in the true gospels, and spin a whole farrago of rubbish round about it. And do you think they could ever have let this incident alone without spoiling it by expanding it, and putting all manner of

vulgarity into their story about it? But the men who told the story were telling simple facts, and when they did not know they said nothing.

But why did not Peter say anything about it? Because nobody had anything to do with it but himself and his Master. It was his business, and no one else's. The other scene by the lake reinstated him in his office, and it was public because it concerned others also ; but what passed when he was restored to his faith was of no concern to any one but the Restorer and the restored. And so, dear friends, a religion which has a great deal to say about its individual experiences is in very slippery places. The less you think about your emotions, and eminently the less you talk about them, the sounder, the truer, and the purer they will be. Goods in a shop-window get fly-blown very quickly, and lose their lustre. All the deep secrets of a man's life, his love for his Lord, the way by which he came to Him, his penitence for his sin, like his love for his wife, had better speak in deeds than in words to others. Of course while that is true on one side, we are not to forget the other side. Reticence as to the secret things of my own personal experience is never to be extended so as to include silence as to the fact of my Christian profession. Sometimes it is needful, wise, and Christ-like for a man to lift a corner of the bridal-curtain, and let in the day to some extent, and to say, "Of whom I

am chief, but I obtained mercy." Sometimes there is no such mighty power to draw others to the faith which we would fain impart, as to say, "Whether this Man be a sinner or no, I know not; but one thing I know, that whereas I was blind now I see." Sometimes—always—a man must use his own personal experience, cast into general forms, to emphasise his profession, and to enforce his appeals. So very touchingly, if you will turn to Peter's sermons in the Acts, you will find that he describes himself there (though he does not hint that it is himself) when he appeals to all his brethren, and says, "Ye denied the Holy One and the Just." The personal allusion would make his voice vibrate as he spoke, and give force to the charge. Similarly, in the letter which goes by his name—the second of the two Epistles of Peter—there is one little morsel of evidence that makes one inclined to think that it is his, notwithstanding the difficulties in the way, viz., that he sums up all the sins of the false teachers whom he is denouncing in this: "Denying the Lord that bought them." But with these limitations, and remembering that the statement is not one to be unconditionally and absolutely put, let the silence with regard to this interview teach us to guard the depths of our own Christian lives.

Now, dear brethren, have you ever gone apart with Jesus Christ, as if He and you were alone in the

world? Have you ever spread out all your denials and faults before Him? Have you ever felt the swift assurance of His forgiving love, covering over the whole heap, which dwindles as His hand lies upon it? Have you ever felt the increased loathing of yourselves which comes with the certainty that He has passed by all your sins? If you have not, you know very little about Christ, or about Christianity (if I may use the abstract word), or about yourselves; and your religion, or what you call your religion, is a very shallow and superficial and inoperative thing. Do not shrink from being alone with Jesus Christ. There is no better place for a guilty man, just as there is no better place for an erring child than its mother's bosom. When Peter had caught a dim glimpse of what Jesus Christ was, he cried: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" When he knew his Saviour and himself better, he clung to Him because he was so sinful. Do the same, and He will say to you: "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole. Go in peace, and be whole of thy plague."

The Travellers to Emmaus

And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them.—LUKE xxiv. 15.

THE reasons for the selection of the first witnesses of the Resurrection are partly discernible. Mary Magdalene was chosen because she loved much, and sorrowed much. Peter was chosen because sin repented always attracts Jesus. Why were these two men chosen? Just because “they communed together and reasoned.” They were trying to extricate themselves from the labyrinth of perplexity in which they were involved, and a seeking mind is as sure to find Jesus as a seeking heart. The comparison between the appearance to Mary, and that to the two travellers on the road to Emmaus, seems to me to throw a great light upon both the incidents. The one picture is all suffused with a rosy glow of emotion, like the dawn; the other is full of the uncoloured light of calm thought. In the one, a word, “Mary,” reveals the Master; in the other,

the revelation is put almost in the background, and instruction takes the foremost place. Some of us apprehend Christ best by feeling, some of us by reason. It is as worthy of Him, and He counts it as fit an employment of Easter Day, to spend hours in clearing the minds of two humble gropers after truth, as to satisfy the yearnings of a heart.

Now, it seems to me that this whole story carries in it for us all great lessons, and that we shall best apprehend these by noting what I have already said is a peculiarity of the incident, viz., that the foreground is filled by instruction, and that the actual manifestation comes at the end, and is almost, if one might say so, subordinate. We have to distinguish these two stages: the instruction by the way, and the revelation in the house. Let me deal with them, and try to draw the lessons from them.

First, then, we have to look at

I. THE INSTRUCTION BY THE WAY.

Now, a very important point, I think, is the entire unimportance of the people to whom the instruction was given. They were not apostles, for the evangelist takes care to tell us that, whilst they were on the road back from Emmaus, "the eleven" were at Jerusalem. They were so insignificant, so evidently merely belonging to the rank and file of the disciples, that the evangelist does not seem to know the name of one of them, and the other whom he does

name never appears again. Yet to these two perfectly insignificant people, Jesus Christ, with the experiences of death and resurrection fresh upon Him, thought it worth His while to come, to enlighten their understandings, and clear up their thoughts. Was not that a revelation, in fact, of an eternal law, that is as true to-day as it was then? He who let Himself be stopped on His road to the cross by a blind beggar in Jericho, and who came and joined Himself to these two conversing on the road, will come to the poorest and weakest amongst us, and will help us to unravel the tangled skein of our difficulties, and to bear the burden of our sorrows, if only we will let Him. This is part of the message of the Resurrection, that the risen Lord joyfully companies with the humblest seeker after light.

And then, if we go a step further, and look at the disposition and temper of the men which drew Him, we get further instruction. The question, with which the stranger who joined Himself to the two broke the ice, passed the usual bounds of courtesy. A chance companion had no right to know what they were talking about. But there was something in the question which evidently showed that it was not curiosity, but sympathy, that prompted it, and that there was a proffer of help underlying it. The naïve answer of Cleopas—"Art thou the only stranger in Jerusalem that does not know what has happened?"

—forgets that though the pedestrian who had joined the couple might have known about the crucifixion, He could not know that they were speaking of it. But the repeated question—in one word in the original—“what things?”—was like the touch of the button that sends the gush of the light out, like the turning of the tap that lets the flood come. For it was answered by the long, voluble, eager statement, which reveals to us the condition of mind of these two men. They had, as it were, two strands of thought in their minds at once, and their effort was to try and braid them together. On the one hand, there was Christ’s death. That left intact their belief that He was “a prophet,” for it was part of a prophet’s *rôle* to die. But it shattered to atoms their belief that He had been the Messiah. And there is an infinite depth of despondency, of “throwing up the sponge,” of giving up the whole thing, in that word, “we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel.” Contrast that with Mary’s “they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.” She was crushed with sorrow at the death of the Beloved; they were mourning not so much for a dead Jesus, as for the death of their own hopes. They were lamenting not the departure of a beloved Friend, but the fall of a Leader; and with the fall of a Leader, the loss of a cause.

And now notice that utter despondency which

perhaps had put into their minds the notion of beginning to desert, and of going away to Emmaus, when they should have stopped at Jerusalem, was the beginning of a process which would certainly have gone on, unless something had come in the way to stop it. Why was it that when the Shepherd was smitten, the sheep were *not* scattered? Here is the beginning of the scattering; why did it not go on? "We trusted,"—how did it come that in forty days they were trusting in that Man more than ever? How was it that when the Leader fell, the cause did not collapse? How was it that it did not befall to the disciples of Jesus the Nazarene, as it befell to the disciples of that "Theudas who boasted himself to be somebody," and when "he was slain his disciples were dispersed," and the revolt came to an end? How? Because Jesus rose from the dead. Deny the Resurrection, and you cannot account for the Church.

Such was the one strand of their thoughts; and then the other opposite strand, so to speak, which, as I said, they were trying to braid into the former, came from the reports of the Resurrection. Look how incredulous they are. "A woman said"; "the angel said." Reports of a report; it is all hearsay. And then comes the staggering fact, "Him they saw not," which extinguishes the faint glimmer of hope. Ah! if they had not been in such a hurry to leave

Jerusalem after the news of messages by angels, and the visit of Peter to the grave, if they had stopped an hour or two longer, Mary would have come into the upper room ; and instead of their having to commune and question with one another as to what these things could mean, they would have seen what they did mean. We often rack our brains to understand half-finished facts, when, if we had had patience, and waited in the right place for a little longer, they would have cleared themselves.

So we come to the Lord's answer. One might have expected that He would have flashed His presence upon them, and cleared up everything. Not so ! They were not ready for that. They needed instruction before they could get revelation. When the instruction came, it all turned round one point. Their error was in thinking that the death of Jesus Christ was fatal to His claims to be the Messiah, and the answer to that was to show them that the death of Jesus Christ was not fatal to, but confirmatory of, His Messianic character, and the necessary condition of His Messianic glory.

Now, dear brethren, although in different shape yet just as really as with these two, in this generation the death of Christ is misunderstood. And we need, the Church needs, and the world needs still more, the teaching of that Easter Day on the road to Emmaus, that the cross, which is the stumbling-

block, is the very centre of the Messianic work ; and that He came to die, "and give His life a Ransom for many." You will never understand the Resurrection ; you will never believe the Resurrection, to any useful purpose, unless you discern, first, the meaning of the death, and have learnt that, therein and thereby, the world's sins were borne by Him, that He was crucified for our offences, and raised again for our justification. The preliminary of profitable meditation on the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the understanding of the mystery and meaning of His cross.

And then, further, let me draw another lesson here, not less relevant to the present, and some of its burning questions ; and that is, that we do not understand the Old unless we recognise in it the introduction to the New. You may hold any theory you like, the most advanced that you can find, about the origin and date and method of composition of the Old Testament—I care very little, except as a matter of literary criticism, about the conclusions that you may draw as to that—if only you see what is written plain upon that whole set of books—which are not only a set of books, but a Book, an organic whole—that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Through them all "one increasing purpose runs." In them is a developed Revelation, converging from all sides and all points of the horizon,

on the one Person, the Incarnate Son of God, and on the one fact of the cross on which He bare the sins of the world. That is the underlying meaning, without the perception of which, learning and ingenuity and criticism may be expended on the Old Testament for evermore, and yet its true glory be altogether undiscovered. So much, then, for the instruction by the way.

Now, let me say a word about the second part of this incident :

II. THE REVELATION IN THE HOUSE.

“He made as though He would have gone further.” That was no make-believe. A chance companion picked up on the road must necessarily part company when they arrive at the house-door, unless he is invited in. They ask Him to enter, partly because they did not wish to lose His companionship ; and quite as much because they did not think that it would be hospitable to let Him go along the dark road by Himself. In recompense for His instruction they offer Him the hospitality of the humble home to which they are going. Jesus Christ would have gone on if He had not been asked to stop. *There* is a revelation, again in concrete fact, of one of the conditions of His communion and fellowship with us, now that He is the risen Lord. He does not abide with us uninvited. He came to these two un-asked, because their communings and questionings

drew Him. He will not abide with them unsought, for their not asking would show that they do not care to have Him. And if you and I wish to have His presence continuous with us, we must invite His presence. We must invite Him by desire; we must invite Him by the opening of our hearts to His entrance; we must invite Him by clearing out of the house, into which we ask Him to come, all foul things. Bees will desert a hive if there is the corpse of some animal in it. Doves will not hover above polluted fields of slain. It is of no use to say to Jesus, "Abide with us," if we do not clear a space for Him in our hearts. If we do so, He will come. Uninvited He will pass on.

Where Jesus is welcomed as a guest He becomes host. It was a strange piece of impoliteness for the Visitor to take the chief place at the table, and begin to break the bread, and bless, and give it to the two. How they must have looked at Him when He was doing this strange thing! And then, "in the breaking of bread," not merely at, but by that means, He was known to them. I do not enter upon the question as to how the revelation was effected. There seems to have been the removal of some subjective hindrances in themselves, because Luke says, "their eyes were opened." But there may have been something in His action which reminded them of the blessed old days when they had often

sat at table with Him, which may have sharpened their perceptions and revealed Him to them. But be that as it may, here is another revelation in fact of an eternal law. If I open my heart to His knock, and invite Him in, He will sup with me, for it was their bread that He took; and I shall sup with Him, for He will make Himself the Host, and impart to me the provisions for body, mind, and heart, which are needful. Take Christ into your heart, and He will take the mastery of the heart, and will declare Himself to be its Lord. Take Christ into your heart, and He will not come there empty-handed, but will impart to you the bread of life.

They who know the risen Christ do not need His bodily presence. "Their eyes were opened," and the opened eyes lost the sun. Yes, just because they were opened. The lesson that was to be taught during those forty days of how to do without the dear Presence as they had hitherto experienced it, was begun at once; and precisely as to Mary the loving, He said, "Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended," so to the two inquirers, as soon as their instruction was completed, "and they knew Him" risen, He passed from their sight. "It was expedient for" them, that He "should go away." And thus we are lifted even by the story of the corporeal presence of the risen Lord into that higher region in which it is the privilege of the Church to live

to-day, where communion does not depend upon anything external, and where, though present with the body, and in that sense absent from the Lord, we may have Christ ever with us, till we shall depart to be "with Christ, which is far better."

The last thought that is here is, that they who know that the Lord is risen are thereby made witnesses of His Resurrection. The two were weary. They had had a day's journey. They were hungry. They had just sat down to the supper-table. The meal was scarcely begun. Night had fallen; the darkness was on them. But they looked at one another, and said, "This is a day of good tidings; we cannot hold our peace. Let us go back to Jerusalem," and at once they sprang to their feet, and set their faces to the road. The men that have known the risen Lord become His witnesses. You and I ought to be that.

Now, all this story, dear friends, which I have been very imperfectly trying, not to tell over again, but to gather the bearings of, lends itself very naturally and beautifully to the use that is so often made of it. It is a symbol of our lives, of what they may become. If we will, Jesus will join Himself to our company. He will walk with us by the way. He will encourage us to tell Him all our intellectual perplexities, as well as all our sorrows and difficulties. He will cast His own light

upon the word. If we desire, He will come with us into our house. He will sit with us at the table. He will provide things necessary for the body and the soul. When the shadows begin to fall, and life's twilight gathers blackness, He will abide with us, and bring us to that eternal Home where we shall sit at His table in His Kingdom, and with newly opened eyes will "see Him as He is," and "know even as we are known." Nor will He ever vanish from our sight, nor shall we go out thence any more for ever.

Help us, O Lord, we beseech Thee, that we may walk with Jesus for our forerunner, with Him for our pattern, with Him for our companion, with Him for our goal and end! And give us grace to live, day by day, in the sweet companionship which clears all difficulties and satisfies all hearts!

The Risen Lord's Charge and Gift

Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.—
JOHN XX. 21-23.

THE day of the Resurrection had been full of strange rumours, and of growing excitement. As evening fell, some of the disciples, at any rate, gathered together, probably in the upper room. They were brave, for in spite of the Jews they dared to assemble; they were timid, for they barred themselves in "for fear of the Jews." No doubt in little groups they were eagerly discussing what had happened that day. Fuel was added to the fire by the return of the two from Emmaus. And then, at once, the buzz of conversation ceased, for "He Himself, with His human air," stood there in the midst, with the quiet greeting on His lips, which might have come from any casual stranger, and minimised

the separation that was now ending : "Peace be unto you."

We have two accounts of that evening's interview which remarkably supplement each other. They deal with two different parts of it. John begins where Luke ends. The latter evangelist dwells mainly on the disciples' fears that it was some ghostly appearance that they saw, and on the removal of these by the sight, and perhaps the touch, of the hands and the feet. John says nothing of the terror, but Luke's account explains John's statement that "He showed them His hands and His side," and that, "Then were the disciples glad," the joy expelling the fear. Luke's account also, by dwelling on the first part of the interview, explains what else is unexplained in John's narrative, viz., the repetition of the salutation, "Peace be unto you." Our Lord thereby marked off the previous portion of the conversation as being separate, and a whole in itself. Their doubts were dissipated, and now something else was to begin. They who were sure of the risen Lord, and had had communion with Him, were capable of receiving a deeper peace, and so "Jesus said to them again, Peace be unto you"; and thereby inaugurated the second part of the interview.

Luke's account also helps us in another and very important way. John simply says that "the disciples were gathered together," and that might mean the

eleven. Luke is more specific, and tells us what is of prime importance for understanding the whole incident, that "the eleven . . . and they that were with them" were assembled. This interview, the crown of the appearances on Easter Day, is marked as being an interview with the assembled body of disciples, whom the Lord, having scattered their doubts, and laid the deep benediction of His peace upon their hearts, then goes on to invest with a sacred mission, "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you"; to equip them with the needed power, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost"; and to unfold to them the solemn issues of their work, "Whose sins ye remit they are remitted; and whose sins ye retain they are retained." The message of that Easter evening is for us all; and so I ask you to look at these three points.

I. THE CHRISTIAN MISSION.

I have already said that the clear understanding of the persons to whom the words were spoken, goes far to interpret the significance of the words. Here we have, at the very beginning, the great thought that every Christian man and woman is sent by Jesus. The possession of what preceded this charge is the thing, and the only thing, that fits a man to receive it, and whoever possesses these is thereby despatched into the world as being Christ's envoy and representative. And what were these preceding experiences?

The vision of the risen Christ, the touch of His hands, the peace that He breathed over believing souls, the gladness that sprang like a sunny fountain in the hearts that had been so dry and dark. Those things constituted the disciples' qualification for being sent, and these things were themselves—even apart from the Master's words—their sending out on their future life's-work. Thus, whoever,—and thank God I am addressing many who come under the category!—whoever has seen the Lord, has been in touch with Him, and has felt his heart filled with gladness, is the recipient of this great commission. There is no question here of the prerogative of a class, nor of the functions of an order; it is a question of the universal aspect of the Christian life in its relation to the Master who sends, and the world into which it is sent.

We Nonconformists pride ourselves upon our freedom from what we call sacerdotalism. Ay! and we Nonconformists are quite willing to assert our priesthood in opposition to the claims of a class, and are as willing to forget it, should the question of the duties of the priest come into view. You do not believe in priests, but a great many of you believe that it is ministers that are “sent,” and that you have no charge. Officialism is the dry-rot of all the Churches, and is found as rampant amongst democratic Nonconformists as amongst the more hierarchical

44 THE RISEN LORD'S CHARGE AND GIFT

communities. Brethren, you are included in Christ's words of sending on this errand, if you are included in this greeting of "Peace be unto you." "I send," not the clerical order, not the priest, but "you," because you have seen the Lord, and been glad, and heard the low whisper of His benediction creeping into your hearts.

Mark, too, how our Lord reveals much of Himself, as well as of our position, when He thus speaks. For He assumes here the royal tone, and claims to possess as absolute authority over the lives and work of all Christian people as the Father exercised when He sent the Son. But we must further ask ourselves the question, what is the parallel that our Lord here draws, not only between His action in sending us, and the Father's action in sending Him, but also between the attitude of the Son who was sent, and of the disciples whom He sends? And the answer is this—the work of Jesus Christ is continued by, prolonged in, and carried on henceforward through, the work that He lays upon His servants. Mark the exact expression that our Lord here uses. "As My Father *hath* sent," that is a past action, continuing in its consequences in the present. It is not "as My Father *did* send once," but as "My Father *hath* sent," which means "is also at present sending," and continues to send. Which being translated into less technical phraseology is just this, that

we here have our Lord presenting to us the thought that, though in a new form, His work continues during the ages, and is now being wrought through His servants. What He does by another, He does by Himself. And we Christian men and women do not understand our function in the world, unless we have realised this : “ Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ,” and His interests and His work are entrusted to our hands.

How shall the servants continue and carry on the work of the Master? The chief way to do it is by proclaiming everywhere that finished work on which the world's hopes depend. But note,—“ *as My Father hath sent, so send I you,*”—then we are not only to carry on His work in the world, but if one might venture to say so, we are to reproduce His attitude towards God and the world. He was sent to be “ the Light of the world ” ; and so are we. He was sent to “ seek and to save that which was lost ” ; so are we. He was sent not to do his own will, but the will of the Father that sent Him ; so are we. He took upon Himself with all cheerfulness the office to which He was appointed, and said, “ My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work ” ; and that must be our voice too. He was sent to pity, to look upon the multitudes with compassion, to carry to them the healing of His touch, and the sympathy of His heart ; so

must we. We are the representatives of Jesus Christ, and if I might dare to use such a phrase, He is to be incarnated again in the hearts, and manifested again in the lives, of His servants. Many weak eyes, that would be dazzled and hurt if they were to gaze on the sun, may look at the clouds cradled by its side, and dyed with its lustre, and learn something of the radiance and the glory of the illuminating light from the illuminated vapour. And thus, "as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you."

Now let us turn to

II. THE CHRISTIAN EQUIPMENT.

"He breathed on them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost!" The symbolical action reminds us of the Creation story, when into the nostrils was breathed the breath of life, and man became a living soul. The symbol is but a symbol, but what it teaches us is that every Christian man who has passed through the experiences which make him Christ's envoy, receives the equipment of a new life, and that that life is the gift of the risen Lord. This Prometheus came from the dead with the spark of life guarded in His pierced hands, and He bestowed it upon us ; for the Spirit of life, which is the Spirit of Christ, is granted to all Christian men. Dear brethren, we have not lived up to the realities of our Christian confession, unless into our death has come, and *there* abides, this life derived from Jesus

Himself, the communication of which goes along with all faith in Him.

But the gift which Jesus brought to that group of timid disciples in the upper room did not make superfluous the further gift on the day of Pentecost. Because the communication of the Divine Spirit to men runs parallel with, depends on, and follows, the revelation of Divine truth, so the ascended Lord gave more of that life to the disciples, who had been made capable of more of it by the fact of beholding His ascension, than the risen Lord could give on that Easter Day. But whilst thus there are measures and degrees, the life is given to every believer in correspondence with the clearness and the contents of his faith.

It is the power that will fit any of us for the work for which we are sent into the world. If we are here to represent Jesus Christ, and if it is true of us that "as He is, so are we, in this world," that likeness can only come about by our receiving into our spirits a kindred life which will effloresce and manifest itself to men in kindred beauty of foliage and of fruit. If we are to be the lights of the world, our lamps must be fed with oil. If we are to be Christ's representatives, we must have Christ's life in us. Here, too, is the only source of strength and life to us Christian people, when we look at the difficulties of our task and measure our own feebleness against

the work that lies before us. I suppose no man ever tried honestly to be what Christ wished him to be amidst his fellows, whether as preacher or teacher or guide in any fashion, who has not hundreds of times clasped his hands in all but despair, and said, "Who is sufficient for these things?" That is the temper into which the power will come. The rivers run in the valleys, and it is the lowly sense of our own unfitness for the task which yet presses upon us, and imperatively demands to be done, that makes us capable of receiving that Divine gift.

It is for lack of it that so much of so-called "Christian effort" comes to nothing. The priests may pile the wood upon the altar, and compass it all day long with vain cries, and nothing happens. It is not till the fire comes down from Heaven that sacrifice and altar and wood and water in the trench, are licked up and converted into fiery light. So, dear brethren, it is because the Christian Church as a whole, and we as individual members of it, so imperfectly realise the A B C of our faith, our absolute dependence on the inbreathed life of Jesus Christ, to fit us for any of our work, that so much of our work is ploughing the sands, and so often we labour for vanity and spend our strength for naught. What is the use of a mill full of spindles and looms until the fire-born impulse comes rushing through the pipes? Then they begin to move.

Let me remind you, too, that the words which our Lord here employs about these great gifts, when accurately examined, do lead us to the thought that we, even we, are not altogether passive in the reception of that gift. For the expression, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" might, with more completeness of signification, be rendered "take ye the Holy Ghost." True, the outstretched hand is nothing, unless the giving hand is stretched out too. True, the open palm and the clutching fingers remain empty, unless the open palm above drops the gift. But also true, things in the spiritual realm that are given have to be asked for, because asking opens the heart for their entrance. True, that gift was given once for all, and continuously, but the appropriation and the continual possession of it largely depend upon ourselves. There must be desire before there can be possession. If a man does not take his pitcher to the fountain the pitcher remains empty, though the fountain never ceases to spring. There must be taking by patient waiting. The old Friends have a lovely phrase when they speak about "waiting for the springing of the life." If we hold out a tremulous hand, and our cup is not kept steady, the falling water will not enter it, and much will be spilt upon the ground. Wait on the Lord, and the life will rise like a tide in the heart. There must be a taking by the faithful use of what we possess. "To him that hath shall

be given." There must be a taking by careful avoidance of what would hinder. In the winter weather the water supply sometimes fails in a house. Why? Because there is a plug of ice in the service-pipe. Some of us have a plug of ice, and so the water has not come. "*Take the Holy Spirit!*"

Now, lastly, we have here

III. THE CHRISTIAN POWER OVER SIN.

I am not going to enter upon controversy. The words which close our Lord's great charge here have been much misunderstood by being restricted. It is eminently necessary to remember here that they were spoken to the whole community of Christian souls. The harm that has been done by their restriction to the so-called priestly function of absolution has been, not only the monstrous claims which have been thereon founded, but quite as much the obscuration of the large effects that follow from the Christian discharge by all believers of the office of representing Jesus Christ.

We must interpret these words in harmony with the two preceding points, the Christian mission and the Christian equipment. So interpreted, they lead us to a very plain thought which I may put thus. This same apostle tells us in his letter that "Jesus Christ was manifested to take away sin." His work in this world, which we are to continue, was to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. We continue

that work when,—what we have all, if Christians, the right to do—we lift up our voices with triumphant confidence, and call upon our brethren to “behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.” The proclamation has a twofold effect, according as it is received or rejected; to him who receives it his sins melt away, and the preacher of forgiveness through Christ has the right to say to his brother, “Thy sins are forgiven because thou believest on Him.” The rejecter or the neglecter binds his sin upon himself by his rejection or neglect. The same message is, as the apostle puts it, “a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death.” These words are the best commentary on this part of my text. The same heat, as the old fathers used to say, “softens wax and hardens clay.” The message of the word will either conch a blind eye, and let in the light, or draw another film of obscuration over the visual orb.

And so, Christian men and women have to feel that to them is entrusted a solemn message, that they walk in the world charged with a mighty power, that by the preaching of the Word, and by their own utterance of the forgiving mercy of the Lord Jesus, they may “remit” or “retain” not only the punishment of sin, but sin itself. How tender, how diligent, how reverent, how—not bowed down but—erect under the weight of our obligations, we should be, if we realised that solemn thought!

Thomas and Jesus

And after eight days again His disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus.—*JOHN XX. 26.*

THERE is nothing more remarkable about the narrative of the Resurrection, taken as a whole, than the completeness with which our Lord's appearances met all varieties of temperament, condition, and spiritual standing. Mary, the lover; Peter, the penitent; the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, the thinkers; Thomas, the stiff unbeliever. The presence of the Christ is enough for them all; it cures those that need cure, and gladdens those that need gladdening. I am not going to do anything so foolish as to try to tell over again, less vividly, this well-known story. We all remember its outlines, I suppose. The absence of Thomas from Christ's first meeting with the assembled disciples on Easter evening; the dogged disbelief with which he met their testimony; his arrogant assumption of the right to lay down the conditions on which he should believe, and Christ's gracious acceptance of the conditions;

the discovery when they were offered that they were not needful ; the burst of glad conviction which lifted him to the loftiest height reached while Christ was on earth, and then the summing up of all in our Lord's words—"Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed"—the last Beatitude, that links us and all the generations yet to come with the story, and is like a finger pointing to it, as containing very special lessons for them all.

I simply seek to try to bring out the force and instructiveness of the story. The first point is—

I. THE ISOLATION THAT MISSES THE SIGHT OF THE CHRIST.

"Thomas, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came." No reason is assigned. The absence may have been purely accidental, but the specification of Thomas as "one of the twelve," seems to suggest that his absence was regarded by the evangelist as a dereliction of apostolic duty ; and the cause of it may be found, I think, with reasonable probability, if we take into account the two other things that the same evangelist records concerning this apostle. One is his exclamation, in which a constitutional tendency to accept the blackest possibilities as certainties, blends very strangely and beautifully with an intense and brave devotion to his Master, "Let us also go," said Thomas, when Christ announced His intention, but a few days before

the Passion, of returning to the grave of Lazarus, "that we may die with Him." "He is going to His death, that I am sure of, and I am going to be beside Him even in His death." A constitutional pessimist! The only other notice that we have of him is that he broke in—with apparent irreverence which was not real—with a brusque contradiction of Christ's saying that they knew the way, and they knew His goal. "Lord! we know not whither Thou goest,"—there spoke pained love fronting the black prospect of eternal separation,—“and how can we know the way?”—there spoke almost impatient despair.

So is not that the kind of man who on the Resurrection day would have been saying to himself, even more decidedly and more bitterly than the two questioning thinkers on the road to Emmaus had said it, "We trusted that this had been He, but it is all over now"? The keystone was struck out of the arch, and this brick tumbled away by itself. The hub was taken out of the wheel, and the spokes fell apart. The divisive tendency was begun, as I had occasion to remark in another sermon of this series. Thomas did the very worst thing that a melancholy man can do, went away to brood in a corner by himself, and so to exaggerate all his idiosyncrasies, to distort the proportion of truth, to hug his despair, by separating himself from his fellows. Therefore he lost what they got, the sight

of the Lord. He "was not with them" when Jesus came. Would he not have been better in the upper room than gloomily turning over in his mind the dissolution of the fair company and the shipwreck of all his hopes?

May we not learn a lesson? I venture to apply these words, dear friends, to our gatherings for worship. The worst thing that a man can do when disbelief, or doubt, or coldness shrouds his sky, and blots out the stars, is to go away by himself and shut himself up with his own, perhaps morbid, or, at all events, disturbing, thoughts. The best thing that he can do is to go amongst his fellows. If the sermon does not do him any good, the prayers and the praises and the sense of brotherhood will help him. If a fire is going out, draw the dying coals close together, and they will make each other break into a flame. One great reason for some of the less favourable features that modern Christianity presents, is that men are beginning to think less than they ought to do, and less than they used to do, of the obligation and the blessing, whatever their spiritual condition, of gathering together for the worship of God. But, further, there is a far wider thought than that here, which I have already referred to, and which I do not need to dwell upon, namely, that, although, of course, there are very plain limits to be put to the principle, yet it is a principle, that

solitude is not the best medicine for any disturbed or saddened soul. It is true that solitude is the mother-country of the strong, and that unless we are accustomed to live very much alone, we shall not live very much with God. But, on the other hand, if you cut yourself off from the limiting, and therefore developing, society of your fellows, you will rust, you will become what they call eccentric. Your idiosyncrasies will swell into monstrosities, your peculiarities will not be subjected to the gracious process of pruning which society with your fellows, and especially with Christian hearts, will bring to them. And in every way you will be more likely to miss the Christ than if you were kindly with your kind, and went up to the house of God in company.

Take the next point that is here :

II. THE STIFF INCREDULITY THAT PRESCRIBED TERMS.

When Thomas came back to his brethren, they met him with the witness that they had seen the Lord, and he met them as they had met the witnesses that brought the same message to them. They had thought the women's words "idle tales." Thomas gives them back their own incredulity. I need not remind you of what I have already had occasion to say, how much this frank acknowledgment that none of these, who were afterwards to be witnesses of the Resurrection to the world, accepted

testimony to the Resurrection as enough to convince them, enhances the worth of their testimony, and how entirely it shatters the conception that the belief in a Resurrection was a mist that rose from the undrained swamps of their own heated imaginations.

But notice how Thomas exaggerated their position, and took up a far more defiant one than any of them had done. He is called "doubting Thomas." He was no doubter. Flat, frank, dogged disbelief, and not hesitation or doubt, was his attitude. The very form in which he puts his requirement shows how he was hugging his unbelief, and how he had no idea that what he asked would ever be granted. "Unless I have so-and-so I will not," indicates an altogether spiritual attitude from what "If I have so-and-so, I will," would have indicated. The one is the language of willingness to be persuaded, the other is the token of a determination to be obstinate. What right had he—what right has any man—to say, "So-and-so must be made plain to me, or I will not accept a certain truth"? You have a right to ask for satisfactory evidence; you have no right to make up your minds beforehand what that must necessarily be. Thomas showed his hand not only in the form of his expression, not only in his going beyond his province and prescribing the terms of surrender, but also in the terms which he

prescribed. True, he is only saying to the other apostles, "I will give in if I have what you had," for Jesus Christ had said to them, "Handle Me and see." But although thus they could say nothing in opposition, it is clear that he was asking more than was needful, and more than he had any right to ask. And he shows his hand, too, in another way. "I will not believe" ;—what business had he, what business have you, to bring any question of will into the act of belief or credence? Thus, in all these four points, the form of the demand, the fact of the demand, the substance of the demand, and the implication in it that to give or withhold assent was a matter to be determined by inclination, this man stands not as an example of a doubter, but as an example, of which there are too many copies amongst us always, of a determined disbeliever and rejecter.

So I come to the third point, and that is :

III. THE REVELATION THAT TURNED THE DENIER INTO A RAPTUROUS CONFESSOR.

What a strange week that must have been between the two Sundays—that of the Resurrection and the next! Surely it would have been kinder if the Christ had not left the disciples, with their new-found, tremulous, raw conviction. It would have been less kind if He had been with them. For there is nothing that is worse for the solidity of a man's spiritual development than that it should be precipitated, and

new thoughts must have time to take the shape of the mind into which they come, and to mould the shape of the mind into which they come. So they were left to quiet reflection, to meditation, to adjust their thoughts, to get to understand the bearings of the transcendent fact. And as a mother will go a little way off from her little child, in order to encourage it to try to walk, they were left alone to make experiments of that self-reliance which was also reliance on Him, and which was to be their future and their permanent condition. So the week passed, and they became steadier and quieter, and began to be familiar with the thought, and to see some glimpses of what was involved in the mighty fact, of a risen Saviour. Then He comes back again, and when He comes He singles out the unbeliever, leaving the others alone for the moment, and He gives him back, granted, his arrogant conditions. How much ashamed of them Thomas must have been when he heard them quoted by the Lord's own lips! How different they would sound from what they had sounded when, in the self-sufficiency of his obstinate determination, he had blurted them out in answer to his brethren's testimony! There is no surer way of making a good man ashamed of his wild words than just to say them over again to him when he is calm and cool. Christ's granting the request was Christ's sharpest rebuke of the request. But there

was not only the gracious and yet chastising granting of the foolish desire, but there was a penetrating warning: "Be not faithless, but believing." What did that mean? Well it meant this: "It is not a question of evidence, Thomas; it is a question of disposition. Your incredulity is not due to your not having enough to warrant your belief, but to your tendency and attitude of mind and heart." There is light enough in the sun; it is our eyes that are wrong, and deep below most questions, even of intellectual credence, lies the disposition of the man. The ultimate truths of religion are not matters of demonstration any more than the fundamental truths of any science can be proved; any more than Euclid's axioms can be demonstrated; any more than the sense of beauty or the ear for music depend on the understanding. "Be not faithless, but believing." The eye that is sound will see the light.

And there is another lesson here. The words of our Lord, literally rendered, are, "become not faithless, but believing." There are two tendencies at work with us, and the one or the other will progressively lay hold upon us, and we shall increasingly yield to it. You can cultivate the habit of incredulity until you descend into the class of the faithless; or you can cultivate the opposite habit and disposition until you rise to the high level of a settled and sovereign belief.

It is clear that Thomas did not reach forth his hand and touch. The rush of instantaneous conviction swept him along and bore him far away from the state of mind which had asked for such evidence. Our Lord's words must have pierced his heart, as he thought: "Then He was here all the while; He heard my wild words; He loves me still." As Nathanael, when he knew that Jesus had seen him under the fig-tree, broke out with the exclamation, "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God," so Thomas, smitten as by a lightning flash with the sense of Jesus' all-embracing knowledge and all-forgiving love, forgets his incredulity and breaks into the rapturous confession, the highest ever spoken while He was on earth: "My Lord and my God." So swiftly did his whole attitude change. It was as when the eddying volumes of smoke in some great conflagration break into sudden flame, the ruddier and hotter, the blacker they were. Sight may have made Thomas believe that Jesus was risen, but it was something other and more inward than sight that opened his lips to cry, "My Lord and my God."

We note

IV. A LAST BEATITUDE THAT EXTENDS TO ALL GENERATIONS.

"Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed." I need not do more than just in a sentence remind you that we shall very poorly

understand either this saying or this Gospel or the greater part of the New Testament, if we do not make it very clear to our minds that "believing" is not credence only but trust. The object of the Christian's faith is not a proposition; it is not a dogma nor a truth, but a Person. And the act of faith is not an acceptance of a given fact, a Resurrection or any other, as true, but it is a reaching out of the whole nature to Him and a resting upon Him. I have said that Thomas had no right to bring the will to bear on the act of belief, considered as the intellectual act of accepting a thing as true. But Christian faith, being more than intellectual belief, does involve the activity of the will. Credence is the starting-point, but it is no more. There may be belief in the truth of the gospel and not a spark of faith in the Christ revealed by the gospel.

Even in regard to that lower kind of belief, the assent which does not rest on sense has its own blessing. We sometimes are ready to think that it would have been easier to believe if "we had seen with our eyes, and our hands had handled the (incarnate) Word of Life," but that is a mistake.

This generation, and all generations that have not seen Him, are not in a less advantageous position in regard either to credence or to trust, than were those that companied with Him on earth, and the

blessing which He breathed out in that upper room comes floating down the ages like a perfume diffused through the atmosphere, and is with us fragrant as it was in the days of His flesh. There is nothing in the world's history comparable to the warmth and closeness of conscious contact with that Christ, dead for nearly nineteen centuries now, which is the experience to-day of thousands of Christian men and women. All other names pass, and as they recede through the ages, thickening veils of oblivion, mists of forgetfulness, gather round them. They melt away into the fog and are forgotten. Why is it that one Person, and one Person only, triumphs even in this respect over space and time, and is the same close friend with whom millions of hearts are in loving touch, as He was to those that gathered around Him upon earth?

What is the blessing of this faith that does not rest on sense, and only in a small measure on testimony or credence? Part of its blessing is that it delivers us from the tyranny of sense, sets us free from the crowding oppression of "things seen and temporal"; draws back the veil and lets us behold "the things that are unseen and eternal." Faith is sight, the sight of the inward eye. It is the direct perception of the unseen. It sees Him who is invisible. The vision which is given to the eye of faith is more real in the true sense of that word,

more substantial in the true sense of that word, more reliable and more near than that by which the bodily eye beholds external things. We see, when we trust, greater things than when we look. The blessing of blessings is that the faith which triumphs over the things seen and temporal, brings into every life the presence of the unseen Lord.

Brethren, do not confound credence with trust. Remember that trust does involve an element of will. Ask yourselves if the things seen and temporal are great enough, lasting enough, real enough to satisfy you, and then remember whose lips said, "Become not faithless but believing," and breathed His last Beatitude upon those "who have not seen and yet have believed." We may all have that blessing lying like dew upon us, amidst the dust and scorching heat of the things seen and temporal. We shall have it, if our hearts' trust is set on Him, whom one of the listeners on that Sunday long after spoke of, in words which seem to echo that promise, as "Jesus in whom though now ye see Him not, yet believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."

The Sea and the Beach

This is now the third time that Jesus shewed Himself to His disciples, after that He was risen from the dead.—JOHN xxi. 11.

THE risen Lord's appearances to the disciples on Easter Day were chiefly intended to enkindle and confirm their faith in the fact of the Resurrection. That being done, a pause ensued, during which they had not His presence. They returned to Galilee, and, as it would appear,—some of them at all events,—to the old haunts, and there awaited the fulfilment of the promise: "There shall ye see Him." My text refers to the fulfilment of that promise. The evangelist is careful to point out that this is the third of the Lord's appearances to the assembled disciples, the other two having been those on Easter Sunday itself, and a week after, mainly for the benefit of the unbelieving Thomas.

Now, there is a very obvious and striking difference between these two sets of appearances, which are thus parted by a parenthesis of absence. In the one, the object is, as I have said, mainly to

demonstrate the fact of the Resurrection ; in the other the object is mainly to reveal the consequences of that fact, and to show what the risen Lord will be to His servants, where they may find Him, how they may recognise Him, what He will do for them. Consequently there is an obvious difference in the prominence given to the disciples in the two sets of narratives. In the former they simply appear as doubting and convinced, in the latter they play a much more prominent part.

One other observation must be made in order that we may grasp the whole meaning of this third manifestation to the assembled disciples, and that is that it is a replica of a previous event—the time when the first apostles were called to their office by that miraculous draught of fishes by the same Sea of Tiberias. Differences occur, which are as significant as the resemblances, but this later manifestation is evidently built upon, and refers to, the former. Now, that former incident is by our Lord Himself declared to be symbolical of His call to the apostles to be “fishers of men,” and we are therefore not only permitted, but obliged, to regard this incident, too, as having the same colouring and the same application. It is intended to be, in symbolical form, a revelation of the relation of the risen Lord to His toiling servants. In the former event He was with them in the boat : in this

He stands on the firm beach whilst they toil on the tossing sea. So then, there are two main points here, the toilers on the sea and the Lord on the beach, and the toilers with their Lord at the meal on the shore. Let us look at these two :

We have in the former part of the incident—

I. THE TOILERS ON THE SEA, AND THE LORD ON THE SHORE.

A little group of seven disciples had held together, and come back, as I said, to their old haunts. The composition of the group is remarkable. Three of the seven belonged to the first set of disciples ; a fourth was the unbelieving Thomas, who had had enough of solitary brooding, and now found safety in companionship ; a fifth was Nathanael, and then there were two unnamed disciples. The three inseparables, Peter, James, and John, are separated in the catalogue here ; Peter being put first, and James and John at the end, veiled under their patronymic. Does not that place of inferiority, and that half-concealed declaration of their presence on the occasion, coincide with the supposed authorship of this gospel? Who but John himself would have put him at the tail-end of such a catalogue as this?

“Simon Peter saith, we go a fishing.” The man of action felt waiting to be irksome, and the rest of them fell in with his proposal. They had come

to Galilee to meet Christ. It might have seemed a very dull, prosaic kind of thing to go back to the old life with nets and boats, after the excitements and the blessednesses of the three years of communion, and with such an expectation flaming in their hearts, but it was wise. And we shall be wise if we learn that wholesome expectation of great crises should never make us disgusted with small duties. The steadying effect of sticking to humble tasks is taught us here, and the wisdom of always making our waiting, which is no small part of our work on earth, associated with active endeavour. We shall be most sure of meeting Jesus Christ in the dusty roads of common life, if we are expecting with an inward and an upward-looking eye, even while we toil and travel. It was to "shepherds keeping watch over their flocks by night" that the infant King was shown. It was to a handful of toiling fishermen in a slimy boat that the Master appeared on the shore. "I being in the way, the Lord met me."

The night's toil had been in vain. The rising sunshine ended the hopes of a haul. And so it was at the very moment that disappointment would be busiest at their hearts that the Stranger was seen on the beach. His question is scarcely adequately represented either in the Authorised or the Revised Version, for it has not reference so much to their supply of food for themselves as to the success of

their fishing, and is the kind of question that a curious passer-by, or an intending purchaser, would be likely to put. And the answer, curt, is such as weary fishermen with empty nets, who had something else to do than talk to a passer-by, would be likely to fling over a hundred yards of water. "They answered, No." We do not need to bring in any idea of a personal change in the corporeity of Jesus Christ to understand their non-recognition of Him. It was the grey of the morning; they were not thinking about Him; they had something else to look at, they scarcely looked at Him. They answered as briefly as possible, and then went on with their work.

Then came the first of the revealing words: "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find." Brethren, the risen Christ directs His servants. The season may seem to be past, long and futile toil may have discouraged and saddened us. Hope may be nearly dead, but if we will keep our hearts, as we ought to keep them, in the attitude of waiting—aye! and sometimes though we do not so keep our hearts, and are thinking about anything else, we shall hear,—by His providences, by the whispers of His Spirit in our spirits, by His shaping and directing of our own honest attempts to ascertain our duty—we shall hear Him speak; never fear! For this incident is no mere exhibition, in a

transitory fashion, of a transitory blessing, but it is the revelation—not symbolically, but actually, as being the natural expression of His interest in His servants' work—of the perpetual fact that they that wait on Him to be guided will be guided, in the measure of their docile waiting, and that our lives, all of them, may be regulated by the hand of that directing Christ, who, from the safe shore, guides the tossing boats. That is no mere fanciful spiritualising of a fact which was never meant to carry such weighty lessons, but it is the discernment, beneath one incident, of the perpetual principle from which that incident flows, and from which other similar ones will flow, if we fulfil the conditions. The risen Christ, unseen, is interested in His servants' toils, and the risen Christ will guide us, if we will let ourselves be guided.

Then comes the other thought, that that guiding Christ is the Source of success, as well as the Fountain of counsel. "They cast, and were not able to draw for the multitude of fishes." No doubt they thought to themselves—"The Stranger there on the beach has seen some signs of a shoal from His higher elevation that we on the water's level have failed to note." But, at all events, they obeyed, and obeying they received the result. The success may not always come. Often it does not come so far as outward things are concerned; but the true success,

that of knitting my heart and will more closely to the heart and will of Jesus Christ, always does come. And when He chooses, and knows it to be best for us, the empty nets will be filled, and we shall be amazed at the results of our toil.

Then, further, the risen Lord, directing and prospering the obedience of His servants, is recognised by the swift insight of love. John sits quiet in the boat, and, not because his eyes were clearest, but because his love was deepest, and his temperament reflective, he first pierced the veil, and found the Friend behind it. The same experiences happened to him as to the others. The same experiences happen to many of us, but some of us are blind, and some of us can see. They that see are they who love, and they who ponder. Ah! brethren, if we were only meditatively to reflect upon the facts of our individual lives, and that not only for the purpose of deducing from our past experience maxims that might guide our steps to earthly success, we should more frequently be thrilled with the startling joy of discerning, in what had seemed vacancy, the Presence, and in what had seemed a Stranger, the veritable Christ Himself. And when you and I can say, looking upon some event that to others seems to be common and earthly, "It is the Lord!" then crooked things are made straight, and rough places plain; and the heart is calmed, and the muscles are

braced, and work is possible, and all vigour and peace pitch their tents in our happy hearts. The eye that sees the Lord amidst the whirl of earthly things, sees all that it needs for peace and power.

I need not do more than remind you of the contrast that is so obvious that everybody can see it, between the disciple who is contented with vision, and the disciple, less strong in vision, but moved by the need for action. John said, "It is the Lord!" and that was enough for him. Peter had not seen that it was the Lord, but to know that it was, was not enough for him. So, picking up his fisher's coat, and hastily girding himself with it, he floundered over the side of the boat in the growing light, and somehow or other, half swimming, half wading, and not knowing how, he got at last to the Master's feet. What sent him on that unnecessary rush, when he might have sat in the boat and come with the rest? Partly temperament, the need of action, partly a touch of his old fussiness and wish to be distinguished as well as to be doing. But I think more than all, the remembrance of his fall, and of his secret interview on Easter Day. On the occasion of the first draught of fishes he fell at Christ's feet saying: "Go away, for I am too sinful to be in Thy presence." On the second occasion he cast himself at the Master's feet, and clung to Him, saying: "Let me cling to Thee, for I am too sinful to be absent

from Thee." And which was the truer penitence? Let our own hearts tell us.

We have here—

II. THE TOILERS AND THEIR LORD TOGETHER ON THE SHORE AT THE MEAL.

We read that the rest of the disciples came in more sober fashion, bringing the boat with them through the hundred yards of distance. And when they landed they saw a fire on the beach, and the materials of a simple meal. There is no need to suppose a miracle; but if it were not a miracle, who lit that fire? Who brought the fish and the bread? Jesus Christ. You may draw symbolic meaning out of the fact, but let us cling to the plain fact to begin with, that the hands which were pierced with the nails, and were to wield the sceptre of the universe, gathered together the brands for the fire, and brought there the bread and the food. It was just what the mothers or wives of these men would have done. It was just the thing that seven fishermen, fagged with a night's work, wet with hauling nets, hungry with the keen morning air, needed most. And is it not, in its plain, prosaic form, the bearer of a great message for us—that Jesus Christ, our risen Lord, cares for every part of His servant's nature, and for the smallest and the humblest of His servant's necessities? The risen Saviour lays the fire, and brings the food for the toilers, and that fact was meant to

be, in transient form, a revelation of one part of the perpetual relations between our Lord and His disciples.

We may note, further, how here there is the servants' contribution to what the Lord had prepared. "Bring of the fish that ye have caught." Notice the fisherman's instinct in telling the extent of the catch. John had been accustomed, in the old days, to lay out his fish on the beach and count them, and he did it that morning; and so shows us, I think, that we have here to deal with the word of a very sober-minded, unenthusiastic eye-witness, who, having it for his main object to speak about the manifestation of the risen Lord, was cool enough to count the fish before they carried some of them to the fire of coals. That is not much like a hot-minded enthusiast, who was the slave of some hallucination. The lesson taught us is that Jesus Christ accepts, and is glad to have given to Him, by our own act, the results which His counsel and His blessing have enabled us to achieve.

About the meal on the shore itself, I have but a word to say. We cannot but note its analogies to, and its differences from, former incidents, such as the Lord's Supper, for instance, or the meal at Emmaus, or the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, on the other side of the lake. But, passing these, note just two points. This meal suggests to us how that risen

Lord, even here on earth, will and does care for the needs of His servants, and gives to them not only counsel in their toil, but refreshment after it. The consequences of our obedience become the food of our spirits, and they who hear Christ's voice, and have toiled by His command, are nourished and sustained by the result of their efforts. It is the law for life: "He that will not work neither shall he eat." "In the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat bread."

But this is more than a parable for earth; it is a prophecy for heaven. He on the steadfast shore welcomes His servants thither, from their toil on the tossing sea; and when they land they come not empty-handed, but bearing with them their works that "follow them," and, as the prophet says, "they that have gathered it shall eat it in the courts of my holiness." So, dear friends, it may be with us all, if we will. We, too, toiling in the night, may be aware of a Presence that sheds peace across the waters, like a moonbeam over a stormy sea. We, too, if we keep our ears open, may hear the counsel and command of His directing voice. We, too, if we obey that voice when we do hear it, may be surprised with long-delayed, and therefore the more joyous success, which will turn apparent frustration into triumphant fruition. But whether apparent success be granted to us or not, all faithful service bears fruit unto life eternal. And when He calls us from the wet nets

and the pitching boat, on to the steadfast shore, we may come not empty-handed, but bearing in our hands results which are the consequences not so much of our toil, as of His blessing. He will accept these, and we shall eat of the fruit of our hands, and the Master Himself will gird Himself, and come forth and serve His servants.

Lovest Thou Me?

Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto him, Feed My lambs.—
JOHN xxi. 15.

PETER had already seen the risen Lord. There had been that interview on Easter morning, on which the seal of sacred secrecy was impressed; when, alone, the denier poured out his heart to his Lord, and was taken to the heart that he had wounded. Then there had been two interviews on the two successive Sundays in which the apostle, in common with his brethren, had received, as one of the group, the Lord's benediction, the Lord's gift of the Spirit, and the Lord's commission. But something more was needed; there had been public denial, there must be public confession. If he had slipped again into the circle of the disciple, with no special treatment or reference to his fall, it might have seemed a trivial fault to others, and even to himself. And so, after that strange meal on the beach, we have this exquisitely beautiful and deeply instructive

incident of the special treatment needed by the denier before he could be publicly reinstated in his office.

The meal seems to have passed in silence. That awe which hung over the disciples in all their intercourse with Jesus during the forty days, lay heavy on them, and they sat there, huddled round the fire, eating silently the meal which Christ had provided, and no doubt gazing silently at the silent Lord. What a tension of expectation there must have been as to how the oppressive silence was to be broken ; and how Peter's heart must have throbbed, and the others' ears been pricked up, when it was broken by "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?" ! We may listen with pricked-up ears too. For we have here, in Christ's treatment of the apostle, a revelation of how He behaves to a soul conscious of its fault ; and in Peter's demeanour an illustration of how a soul, conscious of its fault, should behave to Him.

There are three stages here : the threefold question, the threefold answer, and the threefold charge. Let us look at these.

I. THE THREEFOLD QUESTION.

The reiteration in the interrogation did not express doubt as to the veracity of the answer, nor dissatisfaction with its terms ; but it did express, and was meant, I suppose, to suggest to Peter and to the

others, that the threefold denial needed to be obliterated by the threefold confession ; and that every black mark that had been scored deep on the page by that denial needed to be covered ever with the gilding or bright colouring of the triple acknowledgment. And so thrice having said, " I know him not ! " Jesus with a gracious violence, forced him to say thrice, " Thou knowest that I love Thee." The same intention to compel Peter to go back upon his past comes out in two things besides the triple form of the question. The one is the designation by which he is addressed, " Simon, son of Jonas," which travels back, as it were, to the time before he was a disciple, and points a finger to the weak humanity before it had come under the influence of Jesus Christ. " Simon, son of Jonas," was the name that he bore in the days before his discipleship. It was the name by which Jesus had addressed him, therefore, on that never-to-be-forgotten turning-point of his life, when he was first brought to Him by his brother Andrew. It was the name by which Jesus had addressed him at the very climax of his past life when, high up, he had been able to see far ; and in answer to the Lord's question, had rung out the confession : " Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." So the name by which Jesus addresses him now says to him in effect : " Remember thy human weakness ;

remember how thou wert drawn to Me ; remember the high-water mark of thy discipleship, when I was plain before thee as the Son of God, and, remembering all these, answer Me—lovest thou Me ?”

The same intention to drive Peter back to the wholesome remembrance of a stained past is obvious in the first form of the question. Our Lord mercifully does not persist in giving to it that form in the second and third instances : “ Lovest thou Me more than these ?” More than these, what ? I cannot for a moment believe that that question means something so trivial and irrelevant as “ Lovest thou Me more than these nets, and boats, and the fishing ?” No ; in accordance with the purpose that runs through the whole, of compelling Peter to retrospect, it says to him, “ Do you remember what you said a dozen hours before you denied Me, ‘ Though all should forsake Thee, yet will not I ’ ? Are you going to take that stand again ? Lovest thou Me more than these, that never discredited their boasting so shamefully ?”

So, dear brethren, here we have Jesus Christ, in His treatment of this penitent and half-restored soul, forcing a man, with merciful compulsion, to look steadfastly and long at his past sin, and to retrace step by step, shameful stage by shameful stage, the road by which he had departed so far. Every foul place he is to stop and look at, and think about. Each detail he has to bring up before his mind.

Was it not cruel of Jesus thus to take Peter by the neck, as it were, and hold him right down, close to the foul things that he had done, and say to him, "Look, look, look ever, and answer, Lovest thou Me?" No; it was not cruel; it was true kindness. Peter had never been so abundantly and permanently penetrated by the sense of the sinfulness of his sin, as after he was sure, as he had been made sure in that great interview, that it was all forgiven. So long as a man is disturbed by the dread of consequences, so long as he is doubtful as to his relation to the forgiving Love, he is not in a position beneficially and sanely to consider his evil in its moral quality only. But when the conviction comes to a man, "God is pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done"; and when he can look at his own evil without the smallest disturbance rising from slavish fear of issues, then he is in a position rightly to estimate its darkness and its depth. And there can be no better discipline for us all than to remember our faults, and penitently to travel back over the road of our sins, just because we are sure that God in Christ has forgotten them. The beginning of Christ's merciful treatment of the forgiven man is to compel him to remember, that he may learn and be ashamed.

And then there is another point here, in this triple question. How significant and beautiful it is that

the only thing that Jesus Christ cares to ask about is the man's love! We might have expected: "Simon, son of Jonas, are you sorry for what you did? Simon, son of Jonas, will you promise never to do the like any more?" No. These things will come if the other thing is there: "Lovest thou Me?" Jesus Christ sues to each of us, not for obedience primarily, not for repentance, not for vows, not for conduct, but for a heart; and that being given, all the rest will follow. There is the distinguishing characteristic of Christian morality, that Jesus seeks first for the surrender of the affections, and believes, and is warranted in the belief, that if these are surrendered, all else will follow; and love being given, loyalty and service and repentance and hatred of self-will and of self-seeking will follow in her train. All the graces of human character which Christ seeks, and is ready to impart, are, as it were, but the pages and ministers of the regal love, who follow behind and swell the *cortège* of her servants.

Christ asks for love. Surely that indicates the depth of His own! In this commerce He is satisfied with nothing less, and can ask for nothing more; and He seeks for love because He is love, and has given love. Oh! to all hearts burdened, as all our hearts ought to be—unless the burden has been cast off in one way—by the consciousness of our own weakness and imperfection, surely, surely, it is a

gospel that is contained in that one question addressed to a man who had gone far astray, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou?"

Here, again, we have Jesus Christ, in His dealing with the penitent, willing to trust discredited professions. We think that one of the signs of our being wise people is that experience shall have taught us once being bit, twice to be shy; and if a man has once deceived us by flaming professions and ice-cold acts, never to trust him any more. And we think that is "worldly wisdom," and "the bitter fruit of earthly experience," and "sharpness," and "shrewdness," and so forth. Jesus Christ, even whilst reminding Peter, by that "more than these," of his utterly hollow and unreliable boasting, shows Himself ready to accept once again the words of one whose unverity He had proved. "Charity hopeth all things, believeth all things," and Jesus Christ is ready to trust us when we say, "I love Thee," even though often in the past our professed love has been all disproved.

We have here, in this question, our Lord revealing Himself as willing to accept the imperfect love which a disciple can offer Him. Of course, many of you well know that there is a very remarkable play of expression here. In the two first questions the word which our Lord employs for "love" is not the same as that which appears in Peter's two first answers.

Christ asks for one kind of love ; Peter proffers another. I do not enter upon discussion as to the distinction between these two apparent synonyms. The kind of love which Christ asks for is higher, nobler, less emotional, and more associated with the whole mind and will. It is the inferior kind, the more warm, more sensuous, more passionate and emotional, which Peter brings. And then, in the third question, our Lord, as it were, surrenders and takes Peter's own word, as if He had said, "Be it so. You shrink from professing the higher kind ; I will take the lower ; and I will educate and bring that up to the height that I desire you to stand at." Ah, brother, however stained and imperfect, however disproved by denials, however tainted by earthly associations, Jesus Christ will accept the poor stream of love, though it be but a trickle when it ought to be a torrent, which we can bring Him.

These are the lessons which it seems to me lie in this triple question. I have dealt with them at the greater length, because those which follow are largely dependent upon them. But let me just turn now briefly, in the second place, to—

II. THE TRIPLE ANSWER.

"Yea, Lord ; Thou knowest that I love Thee." Is not that beautiful, that the man who by Christ's Resurrection, as the last of the answers shows, had been led to the loftiest conception of Christ's

omniscience, and regarded Him as knowing the hearts of all men, should, in the face of all that Jesus Christ knew about his denial and his sin, have dared to appeal to Christ's own knowledge? What a superb and all-conquering confidence in Christ's depth of knowledge and forgivingness of knowledge that answer showed! He felt that Jesus could look beneath the surface of his sin, and see that below it there was, even in the midst of the denial, a heart that in its depths was true. It is a tremendous piece of confident appeal to the deeper knowledge, and therefore the larger love and more abundant forgiveness, of the righteous Lord—"Thou knowest that I love Thee."

Brethren, a Christian man ought to be sure of his love to Jesus Christ. You do not study your conduct in order to infer from it your love to others. You do not study your conduct in order to infer from it your love to your wife, or your husband, or your parents, or your children, or your friend. Love is not a matter of inference; it is a matter of consciousness and intuition. And whilst self-examination is needful for us all for many reasons, a Christian man ought to be as sure that he loves Jesus Christ as he is sure that he loves the dearest upon earth.

It used to be the fashion long ago—this generation has not depth enough to keep up the fashion—for Christian people to talk as if it were a point they

longed to know, whether they loved Jesus Christ or not. There is no reason why it should be a point we long to know. You know all about your love to one another, and you are sure about that. Why are you not sure about your love to Jesus Christ? "Oh, but," you say, "look at my sins and failures"; and if Peter had looked only at his sins, do you not think that the words would have stuck in his throat? He did look, but he looked in a very different way from that of trying to ascertain from his conduct whether he loved Jesus Christ or not. Brethren, any sin is inconsistent with Christian love to Christ. Thank God we have no right to say of any sin that it is incompatible with that love! More than that; a great, gross, flagrant, sudden fall like Peter's is a great deal less inconsistent with love to Christ than are the continuously unworthy, worldly, selfish, Christ-forgetting lives of hosts of complacent, professing Christians to-day. White ants will eat up the carcass of a dead buffalo quicker than a lion will. And to have denied Christ once, twice, thrice, in the space of an hour, and under strong temptation, is not half so bad as to call Him "Master" and "Lord," and day by day, week in, week out, in works to deny Him. The triple answer declares to us that in spite of a man's sins he ought to be conscious of his love, and be ready to profess it when need is.

III. LASTLY, WE HAVE HERE THE TRIPLE COMMISSION.

I do not dwell upon it at any length, because in its original form it applies especially to the apostolic office. But the general principles which underlie this threefold charge, to feed and to tend both the sheep and the lambs, may be put in a form that applies to each of us, and it is this—the best token of a Christian's love to Jesus Christ is his service of man for Christ's sake. "Lovest thou Me?" "Yea! Lord," thou hast said; go and do. "Feed My lambs; feed My sheep." We need the profession of words; we need, as Peter himself enjoined at a subsequent time, to be ready to "give to every man that asketh us a reason of the hope," and an acknowledgment of the love, that are in us. But if you want men to believe in your love, however Jesus Christ may know it, go and work in the Master's vineyard. The service of man is the garb of the love of God. "He that loveth God will love his brother also." Do not confine that thought of service, and feeding, and tending, to what we call evangelistic and religious work. That is one of its forms, but it is only one of them. Everything in which Christian men can serve their fellows is to be taken by them as their worship of their Lord, and is taken by the world as the convincing proof of the reality of their love.

Love to Jesus Christ is the qualification for all such service. If we are knit to Him by true affection, which is based upon our consciousness of our own falls and evils, and our reception of His forgiving mercy, then we shall have the qualities that fit us, and the impulse that drives us, to serve and help our fellows. I do not say—God forbid!—that there is no philanthropy apart from Christian faith, but I do say that, on the wide scale, and in the long run, they who are knit to Jesus Christ by love will be those who render the greatest help to all that are afflicted, in mind, body, or estate; and that the true basis and qualification for efficient service of our fellows is the utter surrender of our hearts to Him, who is the fountain of love and from whom comes all our power to live in the world, as the images and embodiments of the love which has saved us that we might help to save others.

Brethren, let us all ask ourselves Christ's question to the denier. Let us look our past evils full in the face, that we may learn to hate them, and that we may learn more the width and the sweep of the power of His pardoning mercy, God grant that we may all be able to say, "Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee."

Doing and Tarrying

Jesus said unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou Me.—JOHN xxi. 22.

IN the preceding sermon we have seen that, in the first part of this mysterious interview by the fire of coals on the shore of the lake, Peter's threefold confession obliterated his threefold denial, and won his threefold commission and public restoration to his apostolic office. But that was not all that Jesus had to say that morning to him and to the others. I turn therefore to the second part of this mysterious interview, and note that it groups itself round three sayings of our Lord's, of which I have taken the last as my text, not that I intend to speak of it only, but because it is the summing-up of the whole. These three sayings are a prediction, a command, and a rebuke. The prediction is interpreted by the writer as a forecast of Peter's martyrdom. "When thou wast young thou girdest thyself, but when thou shalt be old, another shall gird thee, and lead thee whither thou wouldest not." That

prediction is attached immediately to the commission, "Feed My sheep," as indicating that the discharge of the function would inevitably lead to the death. Then there follows the command, "Follow thou Me," which looks back to both the commission and the prediction, and sets forth Christ, the chief Shepherd, as the great Example to be followed in life by all the under-shepherds, and changes the whole aspect of martyrdom and death by making it a following of Him. Last comes the rebuke, occasioned by a flash of Peter's old self, possibly due partly to affection, but a great deal more to impulsive curiosity: "Lord, and what shall this man do?" said he, as he saw John following himself and the Lord, and that brought the answer which I have read as my text. I wish to draw out the lessons of these three sayings of our Lord.

I. A PREDICTION.

The form which it takes is picturesque and striking. An hour before, Peter, as we read in this very chapter, "girt himself" with his fisher's coat, and floundered through the shoal water to get to Christ's feet. It was a characteristic action, in which the man's masterful, impulsive nature, energetic, and craving for activity as a safety-valve to his feelings, showed itself. Our Lord takes it as a specimen of the whole characteristic nature of the man, as it had been developed in the buoyant season of his youth and

early manhood. It is a picture of the energetic fisherman, impatient of passivity, strongly self-reliant, scornful of help, and inclined to yield to the impulse of a masterful will. "When thou wast young thou girdest thyself, and wentest whither thou wouldest, but when thou shalt be old," and the natural force is abated, and the attrition of life has worn the energy thin, "thou shalt stretch forth thy hand," that did not use to ask for help, "and another shall gird thee"; and then in the last clause comes out more plainly the purport of the whole: "shalt carry thee whither thou wouldest not." So the early, buoyant energy is enfeebled and passes into passivity and dependence. The service of life, in feeding the lambs and the sheep, is perfected by the service of suffering and the death that he should die.

Now, notice in a word the contrast that is here suggested—which is not to be passed by, though it is not the principal thing—between the strength of youth and the passiveness of old age. "Even the youth shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail." Nature is sapped and weakened, and as a necessary result of having been young, and vigorous, and strong we become old, and flaccid, and feeble. But, brethren, there is a secret of perpetual youth, and it is possible to resist and set at defiance, in the true depths of our being, the law which weakens energy and dims eyesight, if only we will wait upon

the Lord, from whom comes the life that has no tendency to death ; from whom comes the strength that is not exhausted by being put forth, and that has no proclivity to weakness nor needs to fear exhaustion. The supernatural that may pass into the life of every one of us will conquer the natural, and the winter of the year may never need to come. "Even the youths shall faint and be weary," yes ; but "they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength" ; and according to the deep saying of the Swedish seer, "The oldest angels in heaven are the youngest."

But turning from that, which is only incidental to the main drift of the words before us, note how in this prediction Jesus Christ, with the utmost calmness, with the most perfect matter-of-factness, as if the propriety of it was obvious, and also with the most perfect tenderness, sets a man to a task which He knows beforehand is a sentence of death. "Feed My sheep" : if you do, "Another shall gird thee and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." Jesus calls for no recruits under false pretences ; does not coax men into His service by feigned tales of advantages and outward benefits ; does not hide the possible, and in some cases the certain, issues, but says to us, "If you do as I bid you, you will have to suffer a great deal, and you may have to lay down your lives. Do it !" What warrant has He to lay a masterful hand

upon me, and to tell me that, if I have to die for Him, I am yet in the right in following Him? What warrant has He? Ah! He has this right: He died for you and me first, before He asked us to be ready to die for Him; and if we drink in the meaning and the measure of His great love for us, we shall be able to turn to Him and say: "Thou gavest Thy life for me, here I give my life to Thee." Brethren, it is only the risen Lord that has the right to bid us die for Him. But He has the right, and to own the right is to have death abolished and life made ours for ever.

There have been in all ages those who have had, like Peter, to complete the service of activity by the service of suffering. And,—thank God!—in all ages that spring of self-surrender which is opened and made to flow in the rockiest hearts by the recognition of Christ's great and dying love for us—in all ages, and in this age, that spring has not failed. There comes into my mind, as I speak, a family, the members of which were known and dear to some of us, who last year, in a Chinese Yamen, were girded and bound, and carried whither they would not. The father of the family, in the journey from the place of capture to the place of death, a walk of some hundreds of miles, knowing that he was going to his grave, preached Christ at every halting-place, and he and his wife, and their little children stretched out their

necks for the headsman's sword, without reluctance and without a tremor. Thank God for the present-day martyrs of a martyred Christ!

Let us remember that, although the physical death is not demanded from us, the very same connection which is shadowed here as existing between a life of service and a death of suffering, in spirit and reality remains true for all Christian living. There may not be the literal death, but no man will live a noble Christian life unless it is a dying life, and although the natural self may not be weakened by age, the natural self must be weakened by suppression, if we are to live the life. When you and I stretch out our hands, and let Jesus Christ gird us, and carry us whither flesh and blood would not, then, and only then, can we keep His command, "Feed My lambs; Feed My sheep." No noble life is possible unless it be a sacrificed life; and that freedom and self-reliance when we girded ourselves, and went whithersoever we would, is ignoble, and is slavery; whereas the surrendered life, when we stretch out our hands and let Him lead us, is freedom and blessedness. So much, then, for the first of the sayings here, the prediction.

II. Now let us turn to the second, THE COMMAND.

"And when He had spoken this, He saith unto him, Follow Me." Note that the two sayings, that with which I have been dealing, and that with

which we have now to deal, follow, the one immediately upon the other, and yet are parted off from each other. That suggests distinction and yet connection. "He said unto him, Follow Me." From what succeeds in the narrative the command evidently was first meant to call Peter to come after Jesus in some change of place, leaving the little group with the apparent purpose of giving some further private communication. But whilst this is no doubt true, I think that we do not need to wonder whether that private communication was ever given, or what it was, because, as it seems to me, in accordance with the symbolical turn of all the narrative, we are to regard this commandment, though it had a literal fulfilment at the moment, as in the literal fulfilment being but a symbol of the whole Christian life. Jesus gathers up, if I may say so, in this one commandment what He had been saying before, both as to the commission to the life of service, and the prediction of the death of martyrdom. Both of these He, as it were, brings under the *vinculum* of this commandment, and says: "As under-shepherd, follow Me in the feeding of the sheep; and as martyr, follow Me in the death that thou shalt die." I have pointed out in the earlier portion of this incident the allusions to past events recorded in the gospels; and there is a distinct double allusion here to two such. It surely

is not accidental that, whilst the first miraculous draught of fishes by the lake was followed by the command, "Come ye after Me, and I will make you fishers of men"; the second is followed by the parallel command: "Follow thou Me." That applies to the following in service. Then it surely is not accidental either, that whilst a few hours before Calvary, Peter asked: "Why cannot I follow Thee now? I will lay down my life for Thy sake," Jesus Christ should here have said, "Follow thou Me." The "afterwards," when he should follow Him had begun. That applies to the following by laying down the life for His sake.

So we have here Jesus Christ, as always, calmly presenting Himself before us and the whole world as the realised ideal of humanity, in whom is all perfection; to be like whom is to be complete, and to imitate whom is to be tending towards perfect righteousness. "Follow thou Me" is the one sweet word that gathers up into a blessed permission the else harsh, impossible, and despair-producing imperative of duty. All changes when, instead of saying to a man, "Do this," we say to him, "Follow Jesus Christ." It is one thing to obey, or to try to obey, an impersonal "ought"; it is altogether another thing to imitate a personal Christ. And power, and joy, and virtue, are redoubled, and more than that, decupled, when all duty is summed up

in trying to be like Him. It is the very life-blood of love to be conformed to the beloved ; and if we, instead of aiming at a cold, far off, abstract morality, seek to shape our lives after the pattern of a loving, near, personal Jesus, the aspect of duty changes, and life becomes a feast and not an effort.

“Follow thou Me.” You remember the old story of the Douglas that flung the king’s heart amongst the Moors with, “Go on, brave heart, I follow thee,” and recked not of swords or wounds. So may it be with us. I do not dwell on the way in which this imitation of Christ is to be the guiding star of all men who especially are called upon to feed the sheep and the lambs ; but I wish you to remember that this exhortation, regarded as being the one all-comprehensive commandant for life, does not apply only to the service of those who are shepherds ; for Peter himself, remembering this incident, as it seems to me, shared his privilege of following Jesus, which he had once grudged to his dearest friend and fellow-apostle John, amongst us all, when he wrote, “Leaving us an example that we”—all of us—“should follow His steps.” The world would be revolutionised if the Church followed Jesus. The world brings it as its gravest charge against us that we do not, and it has the right to do so, and it is a good thing for us professing Christians when we hear, from the lips of the enemies, as we

may hear if we will listen, the repetition of the Master's command. Go after your Lord, and you will feed His sheep, and you will touch the conscience of the world.

III. AND NOW, LASTLY, WE HAVE HERE THE REBUKE.

As I have said, it is evident that the previous command was accompanied by some motion and change of place, because John followed the two. And it is very beautiful to notice how John does not apologise for, but vindicates as quite right, his apparent intrusiveness, when he describes the man that ventured to follow as being "the disciple as Jesus loved, who also leaned on His breast at supper, and said, Lord which is he that betrayeth Thee?" If these things were true of him, he had a right to believe that no confidence imparted to his special friend, Peter, could be withheld from him; and it was no intrusion, but the recognition of the bond that knit him to Christ and to Peter, that led him to link himself with the pair. And then there comes the flash of Peter's old self, half curiosity, half affection, and the irrepressible desire to be setting everybody right: "Lord, what shall this man do?" That brings an answer, which is a rebuke, and also the reiteration of the commandment: "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou Me."

Now, I do not need to dwell, and your time would not allow me to do so, upon the attitude which our Lord here takes, in full conformity with the attitude which He took in the two preceding sayings, of asserting and exercising His absolute power over the life and death of a man. His "I will" kept John alive, right away down almost to the end of the century. And by the time this chapter was written, as is obvious from the words, "what death he should die," Peter had long since gone, and John was left. Jesus Christ is the Lord of life and, "has the keys of death and the grave."

But apart from that, let me just remind you, in a sentence, how we have here brought into close juxtaposition and narrow compass, the perpetually recurring double manifestation of the Christian life—the life of service and the life of tarrying. Peter's only notion of service was, "Lord, what shall this man *do*?" But there is another kind of service: "If I will that he tarry." Do? Nothing; tarry. Now, if you take the book of the Acts of the Apostles, you find John there side by side with Peter, a kind of silent shadow. He never opens his mouth. He is always at hand, ready to back up his energetic brother, but not a word drops from his lips during all the history in that book. He waits and waits; and the years pass on, and the silence bears fruit in the gospel without which we were poor indeed, though

we had the three others, and Paul, Peter, and the rest—the gospel which, in its deep intuitions, its strong ethics, its spiritual energy, and its enthronement of love, is worthy to be, as it seems to me that it is tending to become, the last phase of the Christian creed. That is what we get from the tarrying apostle.

Mary and Martha are sisters ; Rachel and Leah are both wives. The contemplative and the active life need each other, else the one will become indolent, subjective, diseased ; and the other will become fussy and superficial, and will dry up. It is one of the hardest things in the practical guidance of an individual life to know how much is due to the one and to the other. Only let us remember that the two types are both legitimate types. It is not for me to say which is the higher. But it is for me to say that the active is always tempted to find fault with the contemplative, and to call it indolence. John will let Peter serve as much as he likes ; Peter does not let John go apart and meditate. There have been ages in which the contemplative has crowded out the active, and a monastery in its corruptest state shows the outcome of that experiment. But this age, that is to say, you and I, is exposed to precisely the opposite danger, and I solemnly believe that one of the perils of the Church of to-day is the restless activity which has far more machinery

than it has boiler-power for ; far more work than it has retiring meditation, and which, therefore, with all its energy, is but superficial, and sows much and reaps little. I do not want fewer Christian workers, but I do want more Christian meditation and prayers. I do not want less service, but the service would be better if there was more coming apart into a solitary place with Christ, and resting awhile.

All this incident has a distinct and direct application to ourselves. We hear Christ saying to us, "Lovest thou Me?" It is for us to answer, "Thou knowest that I love Thee." Then we shall get the command, "Follow thou Me," and we shall be able, in some measure, to serve Him with our activity, and to nestle near Him in our contemplations. And so we shall follow Him in life, and follow Him in death, and then pass into the state where "they follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth," and where contemplation will not slacken diligence, nor labour disturb contemplation, for "His servants shall serve Him, and see His face," "Lovest thou Me? Follow thou Me. Abide with Me"—these are the master-words for a noble life, a quiet death, a glorious Eternity.

On the Mountain

Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw Him, they worshipped Him : but some doubted.—MATT. xxviii. 16, 17.

After that, He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once.—1 COR. xv. 6.

TO infer an historian's ignorance from his silence is a short and easy, but a rash, method. Matthew has nothing to say of our Lord's appearances in Jerusalem, except in regard to that of the women in the early morning of Easter Day. But it does not follow that he was ignorant of these appearances. Imperfect knowledge may be the explanation ; but the scope and design of his gospel is much more likely to be so. It is emphatically the gospel of the King of Israel, and it moves, with the exception of the story of the Passion, wholly within the limits of the Galilean ministry. What more probable than that the same motive which induced Jesus to select the mountain which He had appointed as the scene of this meeting should have induced the evangelist to pass by all the other manifestations in order

to fix upon this one? It was fitting that in Galilee, where He had walked in lowly gentleness, "kindly with His kind," He should assume His sovereign authority. It was fitting that in "Galilee of the Gentiles," that outlying and despised province, half heathen in the eyes of the narrow-minded pharisaic Jerusalem, He should proclaim the widening of His Kingdom from Israel to all nations.

If we had Matthew's words only, we should suppose that none but the eleven were present on this occasion. But it is obviously the same incident to which Paul refers when he speaks of the appearance to "five hundred brethren at once." They were the Galilean disciples who had been faithful in the days of His lowliness, and were thus now assembled to hear His proclamation of exaltation. Apparently the meeting had been arranged beforehand. They came without Him to "the mountain where Jesus had appointed." Probably it was the same spot on which the so-called Sermon on the Mount, the first proclamation of the King, had been delivered, and it was naturally chosen to be the scene of a yet more exalted proclamation. A thousand tender memories and associations clustered round the spot. So we have to think of the five hundred gathered in eager expectancy; and we notice how unlike the manner of His coming is to that of the former manifestations. *Then*, suddenly, He was visibly

present where a moment before He had been unseen. But *now* He gradually approaches, for the doubting and the worshipping took place "when they saw Him," and before "He came to them." I suppose we may conceive of Him as coming down the hill and drawing near to them, and then, when He stands above them, and yet close to them—else the five hundred could not have seen Him "at once"—doubts vanish; and they listen with silent awe and love. The words are majestic; all is regal. There is no veiled personality now, as there had been to Mary, and to the two on the road to Emmaus. There is no greeting now, as there had been in the upper chamber; no affording of a demonstration of the reality of His appearance, as there had been to Thomas and to the others. He stands amongst them as the King, and the music of His words, deep as the roll of thunder, and sweet as harpers harping with their harps, makes all comment or paraphrase sound thin and poor. But yet so many great and precious lessons are hived in the words that we must reverently ponder them. The material is so abundant that I can but touch it in the slightest possible fashion. This great utterance of our Lord's falls into three parts: a great claim, a great commission, a great promise.

I. THERE IS A GREAT CLAIM.

"All power is given unto Me in heaven and

in earth." No words can more absolutely express unconditional, unlimited authority and sovereignty. Mark the variety of the gift—"all power"; every kind of force, every kind of dominion is in His hands. Mark the sphere of sovereignty—"in heaven and in earth." Now, brethren, if we know anything about Jesus Christ, we know that He made this claim. There is no reason, except the unwillingness of some people to admit that claim, for casting any sort of doubt upon these words, or making any distinction in authority between them and the rest of the words of graciousness which the whole world has taken to its heart. But if He said this, what becomes of His right to the veneration of mankind, as the perfect example of the self-sacrificing, self-oblivious religious life? It is a mystery that I cannot solve, how any man can keep his reverence for Jesus, "the sage and the humble," and refuse to believe that beneath these tremendous words there lies a solemn and solid reality.

Notice, too, that there is implied a definite point of time at which this all-embracing authority was given. You will find in the Revised Version a small alteration in the reading, which makes a great difference in the sense. It reads, "All power *has been* given"; and that points, as I say, to a definite period. *When* was it given? Let another portion of Scripture answer the question—"Declared to be the Son of God

with power, by the resurrection from the dead." *Then* to the Man Jesus was given authority over heaven and earth. All the early Christian documents concur in this view of the connection between the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and His investiture with this sovereign power. Hearken to Paul, "Became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross ; wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name that is above every name." Hearken to Peter, "Who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory." Hearken to the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "We see Jesus crowned with glory and honour for the suffering of death." Hearken to John, "To Him that is the faithful witness, and the first-born from the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth." Look with his eyes to the vision of the "Lamb as it had been slain," enthroned in the midst of the throne, and say whether this unanimous consent of the earliest Christian teachers is explicable on any reasonable grounds, unless there had been underlying it just the words of our text, and the Master Himself had taught them that all power was given to Him in heaven and in earth. As it seems to me impossible to account for the existence of the Church if we deny the Resurrection, so it seems to me impossible to account for the faith of the earliest stratum of the Christian Church without the acceptance of some such declaration

as this, as having come from the Lord Himself. And so the hands that were pierced with the nails wield the sceptre of the Universe, and on the brows that were wounded and bleeding with the crown of thorns are wreathed the many crowns of universal Kingdom.

But we have further to notice that in this investiture, with "all power in heaven and on earth," we have not merely the attestation of the perfection of His obedience, the completeness of His work, and the power of His sacrifice, but that we have also the elevation of Manhood to enthronement with Divinity. For the new thing that came to Jesus after His resurrection was that His humanity was taken into, and became participant of, "the glory which I had with Thee, before the world was." Then our nature, in its perfection and its sinlessness, is so cognate and kindred with the Divine that humanity is capable of being invested with, and bearing that "exceeding and eternal weight of glory." In that elevation of the Man Christ Jesus, we may read a prophecy, that shall not be unfulfilled, of the destiny of all those who conform to Him through faith, love, and obedience, finally to sit down with Him on His throne, even as He is set down with the Father on His throne.

Ah, brethren, Christianity has dark and low views of human nature, and men say they are too low and too

dark. It is "Nature's sternest painter," and, therefore, "its best." But if on its palette the blacks are blacker than anywhere else, its range of colour is greater, and its white is more lustrous. No system thinks so condemnatorily of human nature as it is ; none thinks so glowingly of human nature as it may become. There are bass notes far down beyond the limits of the scale to which ears dulled by the world and sin and sorrow are sensitive ; and there are clear, high tones, thrilling and shrilling far above the range of perception of such ears. The man that is in the lowest depths may rise with Jesus to the highest, but it must be by the same road by which the Master went. "If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him," and only "if." There is no other path to the Throne but the Cross. *Via crucis, via lucis*—the way of the cross is the way of light. It is to those who have accepted their Gethsemanes and their Calvarys that He appoints a kingdom, as His Father has appointed unto Him.

So much, then, for the first point here in these words ; turn now to the second.

II. THE GREAT COMMISSION.

One might have expected that the immediate inference to be drawn from "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth" would have been some word of encouragement and strengthening to those that were so soon to be left ; and who were beginning

to be conscious of their feebleness. But there is nothing more striking in the whole of the incidents of those forty days than the prominence which is given in them to the work of the Church when the Master had left it, and to the imperative obligations devolving upon it. And so here, not encouragement, but obligation is the inference that is drawn from that tremendous claim. "Because I have all power, therefore you are charged with the duty of winning the world for its King." The all-ruling Christ calls for the universal proclamation of His sovereignty by His disciples. These five hundred little understood the sweep of the commandment, and, as history shows, terribly failed to apprehend the emancipating power of it. But He says to us, as to them, "I am not content with the authority given to Me by God, unless I have the authority that each man for himself can give Me, by willing surrender of his heart and will to Me." Jesus Christ craves no empty rule, no mere elevation by virtue of Divine supremacy, over men. He regards that elevation as incomplete without the voluntary surrender of men to become His disciples and champions, else He does not count that His universal power is established in a human heart. Though that dominion be all-embracing like the ocean, and stretching into all corners of the universe, and dominating over all ages, yet in that ocean there may stand up black and dry

rocks, barren as they are dry, and blasted as they are black, because, with the awful power of a human will, men have said, "We will not have this Man to reign over us." It is willing subjects that Christ seeks in order to make the Divine grant of authority a reality.

In that work He needs His servants. The gift of God notwithstanding, the power of His cross notwithstanding, the perfection and completeness of His great reconciling and redeeming work notwithstanding, all these are vain unless we, His servants, will take them in our hands as our weapons, and go forth on the warfare to which He has summoned us. This is the command laid upon us all, "Make disciples of all nations." Only so will the reality correspond to the initial and all-embracing grant.

Now I have not time to deal at all adequately, or in anything but the most superficial fashion, with the remaining parts of this great commission. "Make disciples of all nations"—that is the first thing. Then comes the second step: "Baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Who are to be baptised? Now, notice, if I may venture upon being slightly technical for a moment, that the word "nations" in the preceding clause is a neuter one, and that the word for "them" in this clause is a masculine, which seems to me fairly to imply that the command

“baptizing them” does not refer to “all nations,” but to the disciples latent among them, and to be drawn from them. Surely, surely the great claim of absolute and unbounded power has for its consequence something better than the lame and impotent conclusion of appointing an indiscriminate rite, as the means of making the disciples! Surely that is not in accordance with the spirituality of the Christian faith!

“Baptizing them into the name”—the name is one, that of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Does that mean the name of God, and of a man, and of an influence, all jumbled up together in blasphemous and irrational union? Surely, if Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have one name, the name of Divinity, then it is but a step to say that three Persons are one God! But there is a great deal more here than a baptismal formula, for to be baptised into the Name is but the symbol of being plunged into the communion of this one threefold God of our salvation. The ideal state of the Christian disciple is that he shall be as a vase dropped into the Atlantic, encompassed about with God, and filled with Him. We all live, and move, and have our being in Him, but some of us have so wrapped ourselves, if I may venture to use such a figure, in waterproof covering, that, though we are floating in an ocean of Divinity, not a drop finds its way in. Cast it aside, and

you will be saturated with God, and only in the measure in which you live and move and have your being in the Name are you disciples.

There is another step still. Making disciples and bringing into the communion with the Godhead is not all that is to flow from, and correspond to, and realise in the individual, the absolute authority of Jesus Christ—"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." We hear a great deal in these days about the worthlessness of mere dogmatic Christianity. Jesus Christ anticipated all that talk, and guarded it from exaggeration. For what He tells us here that we are to train ourselves and others in, is not creed but conduct; not things to be believed—*credenda*—but things to be done—*agenda*—"teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." A creed that is not wrought out in actions is empty; conduct that is not informed, penetrated, regulated by creed, is unworthy of a man, not to say of a Christian. What we are to know we are to know in order that we may do, and so inherit the benediction, which is never bestowed upon them that know, but upon them that, knowing these things, are blessed *in*, as well as *for*, the doing of them.

That training is to be continuous, educating to new views of duty; new applications of old truths,

new sensitiveness of conscience unveiling to us, ever as we climb, new heights to which we may aspire. The Christian Church has not yet learnt—thank God it is learning, though by slow degrees—all the moral and practical implications and applications of “the truth as it is in Jesus.” And so these are the three things by which the Church recognises and corresponds to the universal dominion of Christ, the making disciples universally; the bringing them into the communion of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and the training of them to conduct ever approximating more and more to the Divine ideal of humanity in the glorified Christ.

And now I must gather just into a sentence or two what is to be said about the last point. There is—

III. THE GREAT PROMISE.

“I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world,” or, as it might be read, “with you all the days, even to the accomplishment of the age.” Note that emphatic “I am,” which does not only denote certainty, but is the speech of Him who is lifted above the lower regions where Time rolls and the succession of events occurs. That “I am” covers all the varieties of *was, is, will be*. Notice the long vista of variously tinted days which opens here. Howsoever many they be, howsoever different their complexion, days of summer and days of winter,

days of sunshine and days of storm, days of buoyant youth and days of stagnant, stereotyped old age, days of apparent failure and days of apparent prosperity, He is with us in them all. They change, He is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." Notice the illimitable extent of the promise—"even unto the end." We are always tempted to think that long ago the earth was more full of God than it is to-day, and that away forward in the future it will again be fuller, but that this moment is comparatively empty. The heavens touch the earth on the horizon in front and behind, and they are furthest above us just where we stand. But no past day had more of Christ in it than to-day has, and that He has gone away in the condition of His coming. He therefore departed for a season, that we might receive Him for ever.

But mark that the promise comes after a command, and is contingent, for all its blessedness and power, upon our obedience to the prescribed duty. That duty is primarily to make disciples of all nations, and the discharge of it is so closely connected with the realisation of the promise that a non-missionary Church never has much of Christ's presence. But obedience to all the King's commands is required if we stand before Him, and are to enjoy His smile. If you wish to keep Christ very near you, and to feel Him with you, the way to do it is

no mere cultivation of religious emotion, or saturating your mind with religious books and thoughts, though these have their place ; but on the dusty road of life to do His will and keep His commandments. “If a man love Me he will keep My words, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him.”

The Ascension

And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.—
LUKE xxiv. 50, 51.

And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight.—
ACTS i. 9.

TWO of the four evangelists, viz., Matthew and John, have no record of the Ascension. But the argument which infers ignorance from silence, which is always rash, is entirely discredited in this case. It is impossible to believe that Matthew, who wrote as the last word of his gospel the great words, “All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth . . . lo! I am with you alway . . .” was ignorant of the fact which alone made these words credible. And it is equally impossible to believe that the evangelist who recorded the tender saying to Mary, “Go to My brethren, and say unto them I ascend to My Father, and their Father,” was ignorant of its fulfilment. The explanation of the silence is to be sought in a quite different direction. It comes from

the fact that to the evangelists, rightly, the Ascension was but the prolongation and the culmination of the Resurrection. That being recorded, there was no need for the definite record of this.

There is another singular point about these records, viz., that Luke has two accounts, one in the end of his gospel, one in the beginning of Acts ; and that these two accounts are obviously different. The differences have been laid hold of as a weapon with which to attack the veracity of both accounts. But there again a little consideration clears the path. The very places in which they respectively occur might have solved the difficulty, for the one is at the end of a book, and the other is at the beginning of a book ; and so, naturally, the one regards the Ascension as the end of the earthly life, and the other as the beginning of the heavenly. The one is all suffused with evening light ; the other is radiant with the promise of a new day. The one is the record of a tender farewell, in the other the sense of parting has almost been absorbed in the forward look to the new phase of relationship which is to begin. If Luke had been a secular biographer, the critics would have been full of admiration at the delicacy of his touch, and the fineness of keeping in the two narratives, the picture being the same in both, and the scheme of colouring being different. But as he is only an evangelist, they fall foul of him for his

“discrepancies.” It is worth our while to take both his points of view.

· But there is another thing to be remembered, that, as the appendix of his account of the Ascension in the book of the Acts, Luke tells us of the angel’s message ;—“ This same Jesus . . . shall . . . return.” So there are three points of view which have to be combined in order to get the whole significance of that mighty fact : the Ascension as an end ; the Ascension as a beginning ; the Ascension as the pledge of the return. Now take these three points.

I. WE HAVE THE ASPECT OF THE ASCENSION AS AN END.

The narrative in Luke’s gospel, in its very brevity, does yet distinctly suggest that retrospective and valedictory tone. Note how, for instance, we are told the locality—“ He led them out as far as Bethany.” The name at once strikes a chord of remembrance. What memories clustered round it, and how natural it was that the parting should take place there, not merely because the crest of the Mount of Olives hid the place from the gaze of the crowded city ; but because it was within earshot almost of the home where so much of the sweet earthly fellowship,—that was now to end, had passed ! The same note of regarding the scene as being the termination of those blessed years of dear and familiar intercourse is struck in the fact, so human,

so natural, so utterly inartificial, that He lifted His hands to bless them, moved by the same impulse with which so often we have wrung a hand at parting, and stammered, "God bless you!" And the same valedictory hue is further deepened by the fact that what Luke puts first is not the Ascension, but the parting. "He was parted from them," that is the main fact; "and He was carried up into heaven," comes almost as a subordinate one. At all events it is regarded mainly as being the medium by which the parting was effected.

So the aspect of the Ascension thus presented is that of a tender farewell; the pathetic conclusion of three long, blessed years. And yet that is not all, for the evangelist adds a very enigmatic word: "They returned to Jerusalem with great joy." Glad because He had gone? No. Glad merely because He had gone up? No. The saying is a riddle, left at the end of the book, for readers to ponder, and is a subtle link of connection with what is to be written in the next volume, when the aspect of the Ascension as an end is subordinate, and its aspect as a beginning is prominent. So regarded, it filled the disciples with joy. Thus you see, I think, that without any illegitimate straining of the expressions of the text, we do come to the point of view from which, to begin with, this great event must be looked at. We have to take the same view, and to regard

that Ascension not only as the end of a epoch of sweet friendship, but as the solemn close and culmination of the whole earthly life. I have no time to dwell upon the thoughts that come crowding into one's mind when we take that point of view. But let me suggest, in the briefest way, one or two of them.

Here is an end which circles round to, and is of a piece with, the beginning. "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again, I leave the world, and go unto the Father." The Ascension corresponds with, and meets the miracle of, the Incarnation. And as the Word who became flesh, came by the natural path of human birth, and entered in through the gate by which we all enter, and yet came as none else have come, by His own will, in the miracle of His Incarnation, so at the end, He passed out from life through the gate by which we all pass, and "was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," and yet He passed likewise on a path which none but Himself have trod, and ascended up to heaven, whence He had descended to earth. He came into the world, not as leaving the Father, for He is "the Son of Man which is in heaven," and He ascended up on high, not as leaving us, for He is with us "always, even to the end of the world." Thus the Incarnation and the Ascension support each other.

But let me remind you how, in this connection, we have the very same combination of lowliness and gentleness with majesty and power which runs through the whole of the story of the earthly life of Jesus Christ. Born in a stable, and waited on by angels, the subject of all the humiliations of humanity, and flashing forth through them all the power of Divinity, He ascends on high at last, and yet with no pomp nor visible splendour to the world, but only in the presence of a handful of loving hearts, choosing some dimple of the hill where its folds hid them from the city. As He came quietly and silently into the world, so quietly and silently He passed thence. In this connection there is more than the picturesque contrast between the rapture of Elijah, with its whirlwind, and chariot of fire and horses of fire, and the calm, slow rising, by no external medium raised, of the Christ. It was fit that the mortal should be swept up into the unfamiliar heaven by the pomp of angels and the chariot of fire. It was fit that when Jesus ascended to His "own calm home, His habitation from eternity," there should be nothing visible but His own slowly rising form, with the hands uplifted, to shed benediction on the heads of the gazers beneath.

In like manner, regarding the Ascension as an end, may we not say that it is the seal of heaven impressed on the sacrifice of the cross? "Where-

fore God also hath highly exalted, and given Him a Name, which is above every name; that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow." We find in that intimate connection between the cross and the Ascension, the key to the deep saying which carries references to both in itself, when the Lord spoke of Himself as being lifted up and drawing all men unto Him. The original primary reference no doubt was to this elevation on the cross, "as Moses lifted up the serpent." But the final, and at the time of its being spoken, the mysterious, reference was to the fact that in descending to the depth of humiliation He was rising to the height of glory. The zenith of the Ascension is the rebound from the nadir of the cross. The lowliness of the stoop measures the loftiness of the elevation, and the Son of Man was glorified at the moment when the Son of Man was most profoundly abased. The cross and the Ascension, if I might use so violent a figure, are like the twin stars, of which the heavens present some examples, one dark and lustreless, one flashing with radiancy of light, but knit together by an invisible vinculum, and revolving round a common centre. When He "parted from them, and was carried up into heaven," He ended the humiliation which caused the elevation.

And then, again, I might suggest that, regarded

in its aspect as an end, this Ascension is also the culmination and the natural conclusion of the Resurrection. As I have said, the Scripture point of view with reference to these two is not that they are two, but that the one is the starting-point of the line of which the other is the goal. The process which began when He rose from the dead, whatever view we may take of the condition of His earthly life during the forty days of parenthesis, could have no ending, rational and intelligible except the Ascension. Thus we should think of it not only as the end of a sweet friendship, but as the end of the gracious manifestation of the earthly life, the counterpart of the Incarnation and descent to earth, the end of the cross and the culmination of the Resurrection. The Son of Man, the same that also descended into the lowest parts of the earth, ascended up where He was before.

Now let us turn to the other aspect which the evangelist gives, when He ceases to be an evangelist, and becomes a church historian. *Then* he considers

II. THE ASCENSION AS A BEGINNING.

The place which it holds in the Acts of the Apostles explains the point of view from which it is to be regarded. It is the foundation of everything that the writer has afterwards to say. It is the basis of the Church. It is the ground of all

the activity which Christ's servants put forth. Not only its place explains this aspect of it, but the very first words of the book itself do the same. "The former treatise have I made . . . of all that Jesus began both to do and teach"—and now I am to tell you of an Ascension, and of all that Jesus continued to do and teach. So that the book is the history of the work of the Lord, who was able to do that work, just because He had ascended up on high. The same impression is produced if we ponder the conversation which precedes the account of the Ascension in the book of Acts, which, though it touches the same topics as are touched by the words that precede the account in the gospel, yet presents them in a different aspect, and suggests the endowments with which the Christian community is to be invested, and the work which therefore it is to do, in consequence of the Ascension of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Peter had caught that thought when, on the day of Pentecost, he said, "He, being exalted to the right-hand of the Father, hath shed forth this which ye see and hear." And throughout the whole book the same point of view is kept up. "The work that is done upon earth He doeth it all Himself."

So there is in *this* narrative nothing about parting, there is nothing about blessing. There is simply the ascending up, and the significant addition of the

reception into the cloud, which, whilst He was yet plainly visible, and not dwindled by distance into a speck, received Him out of their sight. The cloud was the symbol of the Divine Presence, which had hung over the Tabernacle, which had sat between the cherubim, which had wrapped the shepherds and the angels on the hillside, which had come down in its brightness on the Mount of Transfiguration, and which now, as the symbol of the Divine Presence, received the ascending Lord, in token to the men that stood gazing up into heaven, that He had passed to the right-hand of the Majesty on high.

Thus we have to think of that Ascension as being the groundwork and foundation of all the world-wide and age-long energy which the living Christ is exercising to-day. As one of the other evangelists, or, at least, the appendix to his gospel, puts it, He ascended up on high, and "they went everywhere preaching the word, the Lord also working with them, and confirming the word with signs following." It is the ascended Christ who sends the Spirit upon men ; it is the ascended Christ that opens men's hearts to hear ; it is the ascended Christ that sends forth His messengers to the Gentiles ; it is the ascended Christ who, to-day, is the energy of all the Church's power, the whiteness of all the Church's purity, the vitality of all the Church's life. He lives, and therefore, there is a Christian community on the

face of the earth. He lives, and therefore it will never die.

So we, too, have to look to that risen Lord as being the power by which alone any of us can do either great or small work in His Church. That Ascension is symbolically put as being to "the right-hand of God." What is the right-hand of God? The Divine omnipotence. Where is it? Everywhere. What does sitting at the right-hand of God mean? Wielding the powers of omnipotence. And so He says, "All power is given unto Me"; and He is working a work to-day, wider in its aspects than, though it be the application and consequence of, the work upon the cross. He cried there, "It is finished!" but "the work of the ascended Jesus" will never be finished until "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ."

There are other aspects of His work in heaven which space will not allow me to dwell upon, though I cannot but signalise them. By the Ascension Christ begins to prepare a place for us. How could any of us stand in the presence of that eternal Light if He were not there? We should be like some savage or rustic swept up suddenly and put down in the middle of the glittering ring of courtiers round a throne, unless we could lift our eyes and recognise a known and loving face there. Where

Christ is, I can be. He has taken one human nature up into the glory, and other human natures will therefore find that it is a home.

The ascended Christ, to use the symbolism which one of the New Testament writers employs for illustration of a thought far greater than the symbol—like a High Priest has passed within the veil, “there to appear in the presence of God for us.” And the intercession which is far more than petition, and is the whole action of that dear Lord who identifies us with Himself, and whose mighty work is ever present before the Divine mind as an element in His dealings, that intercession is being carried on for ever for us all. So, “set your affections on things above, where Christ is, sitting at the right-hand of God.” So, expect His help in your work, and do the work which He has left you to carry on here. So, face death and the dim kingdoms beyond, without quiver and without doubt, assured that where the treasure is, there the heart will be also; and that where the Master is, there the servants who follow in His steps will be also at last.

And now there is the third aspect here of

III. THE ASCENSION AS BEING THE PLEDGE OF THE RETURN.

The two men in white apparel that stood by gently rebuked the gazers for gazing into heaven. They would not have rebuked them for gazing, if

they could have seen Him, but to look into the empty heaven was useless. And they added the reason why the heavens need not be looked at, as long as there is the earth to stand on: "For this same Jesus whom ye have seen go into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go." Note the emphatic declaration of identity; "this *same* Jesus." Note the use of the simple human name; "this same *Jesus*," and recall the thoughts that cluster round it, of the ascended humanity, and the perpetual humanity of the ascended Lord, "the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever." Note also the strong assertion, of visible, corporeal return: "Shall *so* come in *like* manner as ye have seen Him go." That return is no metaphor, no mere piece of rhetoric, it is not to be eviscerated of its contents by being taken as a synonym for the diffusion of His influence all over a regenerated race, but it points to the return of the Man Jesus locally, corporeally, visibly. "We believe that Thou shalt come to be our Judge"; we believe that Thou wilt come to take Thy servants home.

The world has not seen its last of Jesus Christ. Such an Ascension, after such a life, cannot be the end of Him. "As it is appointed upon all men once to die, and after death the judgment, so Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear the second time, without sin unto

salvation." As inevitably as for sinful human nature judgment follows death, so inevitably for the sinless Man, who is the sacrifice for the world's sins, His judicial return shall follow His atoning work, and He shall come again, having received the Kingdom, to take account with His servants, and to perfect their possession of the salvation which by His Incarnation, Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension, He wrought for the world.

Therefore, brethren, one sweet face, and one great fact—the face of the Christ, the fact of the cross—should fill the past. One sweet face, one great fact—the face of the Christ, the fact of His presence with us all the days—should fill the present. One regal face, one great hope, should fill the future; the face of the King that sitteth upon the throne, the hope that He will come again, and “so we shall be ever with the Lord.”

Risen With Christ

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.—COL. iii. 1-2.

WE have been considering the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ in a series of sermons, and in this one I wish to turn to the thought that the followers of the risen Christ are risen. There are three aspects in which the New Testament treats the Resurrection, and these three seem to have successively come into the consciousness of the Church. First, as is natural, it was considered mainly in its bearing on the person and work of our Lord. We may take for illustration the way in which the Resurrection is treated in the earliest of the apostolic discourses, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. Then it came, with further reflection and experience, to be discerned that it had a bearing on the hope of the immortality of man. And last of all, as the Christian life deepened, it came to be discerned that the Resurrection was

the pattern of the life of the Christian disciples. It was regarded first as a witness, then as a prophecy, then as a symbol. Three fragments of Scripture express these three phrases: for the first, "Declared to be the Son of God with power by the Resurrection from the dead"; for the second, "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept"; for the third, "God hath raised us up together with Him, and made us sit together in the heavenly places." I have considered incidentally the two former aspects in the course of previous sermons; I wish to turn at present to that final third one.

One more observation I must make by way of introduction, and that is, that the way in which the apostle here glides from "being risen with Christ" to "where Christ is, sitting at the right-hand of God," confirms what I have pointed out in former discourses, that the Ascension of Jesus Christ is always considered in Scripture as being nothing more than the necessary outcome and issue of the process which began in the Resurrection. They are not separate facts, but they are two ends of one process. And so with these thoughts, that Resurrection develops into Ascension, and that in both Jesus Christ is the pattern for His followers, let us turn to the words before us.

Then we have here

I. THE CHRISTIAN LIFE CONSIDERED AS A RISEN LIFE.

Now we are all familiar with the great evangelical point of view from which the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ are usually contemplated. To many of us Christ's sacrifice is nothing more or less than the means by which the world is reconciled to God, and Christ's Resurrection nothing more than the seal which was set by Divinity upon that work. "Crucified for our offences, and raised again for our justification," as Paul has it—that is the point of view from which most evangelical or orthodox Christian people are contented to regard the solemn fact of the death and the radiant fact of the Resurrection. You cannot be too emphatic about these truths, but you may be too exclusive in your contemplation of them. You do well when you say that they are the gospel; you do not well when you say, as some of you do, that they are the whole gospel. For there is another stream of teaching in the New Testament, of which my text is an example and a multitude of other passages that I cannot refer to now are equally conspicuous instances, in which that death and that Resurrection are regarded, not so much in respect to the power which they exercise in the reconciliation of the world to God, as in their aspect as the type of all noble and true Christian life. You remember how, when our Lord Himself touched

upon the fruitful issues of His death, and said: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit," He at once went on to say that a man that loved his life would lose it; and that a man that lost his life would find it, and proceeded to point, even then, and in that connection, to His cross as our pattern, declaring: "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be."

Made like Him, like Him we rise;
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies.

So, then, a risen life is the type of all noble life, and before there can be a risen life there must have been a death. True, we may say that the spiritual facts in a man's experience, which are represented by these two great symbols of a death and a rising, are but like the segment of a circle which, seen from the one side is convex and from the other is concave. But however loosely we may feel that the metaphors represent the facts, this is plain, that unless a man dies to flesh, to self-will, to the world, he never will live a life that is worth calling life. The condition of all nobleness and all growth upwards is that we shall die daily, and live a life that has sprung victorious from the death of self. All lofty ethics teach that,

and Christianity teaches it, with redoubled emphasis, because it says to us, that the cross and the Resurrection are not merely imaginative emblems of the noble and the Christian life, but are a great deal more than that. For, brethren, do not forget—if you do, you will be hopelessly at sea as to large tracts of blessed Christian truth—that by faith in Jesus Christ we are brought into such a true deep union with Him as that, in no mere metaphorical or analogous sense, but in most blessed reality, there comes into the believing heart a spark of the life that is Christ's own, so as that with Him we do live, and from Him we do live a life cognate with His, who, having risen from the dead, dieth no more, and over whom death hath no dominion. So it is not a metaphor only, but a spiritual truth, when we speak of being risen with Christ, seeing that our faith, in the measure of its genuineness, its depth and its operative power upon our characters, will be the gate through which there shall pass into our deadness the life that truly is, the life that has nought to do with death or sin. And this unity with Jesus, brought about by faith, brings about that the depths of the Christian life are hid with Christ in God, and that we, risen with Him, do even now sit “at the right-hand in heavenly places,” whilst our feet, dusty and sometimes blood-stained, are journeying along the paths of life. This is the great teaching of my

text, and of a multitude of other places ; and this is the teaching which modern Christianity, in its exclusive, or all but exclusive, contemplation of the cross as the sacrifice for sin, has far too much forgotten. “Ye are risen with Christ.”

Let me remind you that this veritable death and rising again, which marks the Christian life, is set forth before us in the initial rite of the Christian Church. Some of you do not agree with me in my view, either of what is the mode or of who are the subjects of that ordinance, but if you know anything about the question, you know that everybody that has a right to give a judgment agrees with us Baptists in saying—although they must not think that it carries anything obligatory upon the practice of to-day—that the primitive Church baptised by immersion. Now, the meaning of baptism is to symbolise these two inseparable moments, dying to sin, to self, to the world, to the old past, and rising again to newness of life. Our sacramentarian friends say that, in my text, it was in baptism that these Colossian Christians rose again with Christ. I, for my part, do not believe that, but that their baptism was the speaking sign of what lies at the gate of a true Christian life I have no manner of doubt.

So the first thought of our text is not only taught us in words, but it stands manifest in the ritual of the Church as it was from the beginning. We die,

and we rise again, through faith and by union through faith, with Christ "that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right-hand of God."

Let me turn, secondly, to

II. THE CONSEQUENT AIMS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above." "To seek" implies the direction of the external life toward certain objects. It is not to seek as if perhaps we might not find; it is not even to seek in the sense of searching for, but it is to seek in the sense of aiming at. And now do you not think that if we had burning in our hearts, and conscious to our experiences, the sense of union with Jesus Christ the risen Saviour, that would shape the direction and dictate the aims of our earthly life? As surely as the elevation of the rocket tube determines the flight of the projectile that comes from it, so surely would the inward consciousness, if it were vivid as it ought to be in all Christian people, of that risen life throbbing within the heart, shape all the external conduct. It would give us wings and make us soar. It would make us buoyant, and lift us above the creeping aims that constitute the objects of life for so many men.

But you say, "Things above: that is an indefinite phrase. What do you mean by it?" I will tell you what the Bible means by it. It means Jesus

Christ. All the nebulous splendours of that firmament are gathered together into one blazing sun. It is a vague direction to tell a man to shoot up, into an empty heaven. It is not a vague direction to tell him to seek the "things above"; for they are all gathered into a person. "Where Christ is, sitting at the right-hand of God,"—that is the meaning of "things above," which are to be the continual aim of the man who is conscious of a risen life. And of course they will be, for if we feel, as we ought to feel habitually, though with varying clearness, that we do carry within us a spark, if I might use that phrase, of the very life of Jesus Christ, so surely as fire will spring upwards, so surely as water will rise to the height of its source, so surely will our outward lives be directed towards Him, who is the life of our inward lives, and the goal therefore of our outward actions?

Jesus Christ is the summing up of "the things that are above"; therefore there stands out clear this one great truth, that the only aim for a Christian soul, consistent with the facts of its Christian life, is to be like Christ, to be with Christ, to please Christ.

Now, how does that aim,—“whether present or absent we labour that we may be well pleasing to Him,”—how does that aim bear upon the multitude of inferior and nearer aims which men pursue, and which Christians have to pursue along with other

men? How does it bear upon them?—Why thus—as the culminating peak of a mountain-chain bears on the lower hills that for miles and miles buttress it, and hold it up, and aspire towards it, and find their perfection in its calm summit that touches the skies. The more we have in view, as our aim in life, Christ who is “at the right-hand of God,” and assimilation, communion with Him, approbation from Him, the more will all immediate aims be ennobled, and delivered from the evils that else cleave to them. They are more when they are second than when they are first. “Seek ye first the Kingdom of God,” and all your other aims—as students, as thinkers, as scientists, as men of business, as parents, as lovers, or anything else—will be greatened by being subordinated to the conscious aim of pleasing Him. That aim should persist, like a strain of melody, one long, holden-down, diapason note, through all our lives. Perfume can be diffused into the air, and dislodge no atom of that which it makes fragrant. This supreme aim can be pursued through, and by means of, all nearer ones, and is inconsistent with nothing but sin. “Seek the things that are above.”

Lastly, we have here—

III. THE DISCIPLINE WHICH IS NEEDED TO SECURE THE RIGHT DIRECTION OF THE LIFE.

The apostle does not content himself with pointing

out the aims. He adds practical advice as to how these aims can be made dominant in our individual cases, when he says, "Set your affections on things above." Now, many of you will know that "affections" is not the full sense of the word that is here employed, and that the Revised Version gives a more adequate rendering when it says, "Set your *minds* on the things that are above." A man cannot do with his love according to his will. He cannot say:—"Resolved, that I love So-and-so"; and then set himself to do it. But though you cannot act on the emotions directly by the will, you *can* act directly on your understandings, on your thoughts, and your thoughts will act on your affections. If a man wants to love Jesus Christ he must think about Him. That is plain English. It is vain for a man to try to coerce his wandering affections by any other course than by concentrating his thoughts. Set your minds on the things that are above, and that will consolidate and direct the emotions; and the thoughts and the emotions together will shape the outward efforts. Seeking the things that are above will come, and will only come, when mind and heart and inward life are occupied with Him. There is no other way by which the externals can be made right than by setting a watch on the door of our hearts and minds, and this inward discipline must be put in force before there will be any continuity or sureness in the outward aim.

We want, for that direction of the life of which I have been speaking, a clear perception and a concentrated purpose, and we shall not get either of these unless we fall back, by thought and meditation, upon the truths which will provide them both.

Brethren, there is another aspect of the connection between these two parts of our text, which I can only touch. Not only is the setting of our thoughts on the things above, the way by which we can make these the aim of our lives. They are not only aims to be reached at some future stage of our progress, but they are possessions to be enjoyed at the present. We may have a present Christ and a present Heaven. The Christian life is not all aspiration ; it is fruition as well. We have to seek, but even whilst we seek, we should be conscious that we possess what we are seeking, even whilst we seek it. Do you know anything of that double experience of having the things that are above, here and now, as well as reaching out towards them ?

I am afraid that the Christian life of this generation suffers at a thousand points, because it is more concerned with the ordering of the outward life, and the manifold activities which this busy generation has struck out for itself, than it is with the quiet setting of the mind, in silent sunken depths of contemplation, on the things that are above. Oh, if we would think more about them we should aim more

at them ; and if we were sure that we possessed them to-day we should be more eager for a larger possession to-morrow !

Dear brethren, we may all have that risen life for ours, if we will knit ourselves, in humble dependence and utter self-surrender, to the Christ that died for us that we might be dead to sin, and rose again that we might rise to righteousness. And if we have Him, in any deep and real sense, as the life of our lives, then we shall be blessed, amid all the divergent and sometimes conflicting nearer aims which we have to pursue, by seeing clear above them that to which they all may tend, the one aim which corresponds to a man's nature, which meets his condition, which satisfies his needs, which can always be attained if it is followed, and which when secured never disappoints. God help us all to say, "This one thing I do, and all else I count but dung, that I may know Him, and the power of His Resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death, if by any means I may attain unto the Resurrection from the dead !"

What Passes And What Abides

One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever.—ECCLES. i. 4.

And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.—1 JOHN ii. 17.

A GREAT river may run through more than one kingdom, and bear more than one name, but its flow is unbroken. The river of time runs continuously, taking no heed of dates and calendars. The importance that we attach to the beginnings or endings of years and centuries is a sentimental illusion, but even an illusion that rouses us to a consciousness of the stealthy gliding of the river may do us good, and we need all the helps we can find to wise retrospect and sober anticipation. So we must let the season colour our thoughts, even whilst we feel that in yielding to that impulse we are imagining what has no reality in the passing from the last day of one century to the first day of another.

I do not mean to discuss in this sermon either the old century or the new in their wider social and

other aspects. That has been done abundantly. We shall best do our parts in making the days, and the years, and the century what they should be, if we let the truths that come from these combined texts sink into and influence our individual lives. I have put them together, because they are so strikingly antithetical, both true, and yet looking at the same facts from opposite points of view. But the antithesis is not really so complete as it sounds at first hearing, because what the preacher means by "the earth" that "abideth for ever" is not quite the same as what the apostle means by the "world" that "passes," and the "generations" that come and go are not exactly the same as the men that "abide for ever." But still the antithesis is real and impressive. The bitter melancholy of the Preacher saw but the surface; the joyous faith of the apostle went a great deal deeper, and putting the two sets of thoughts and ways of looking at man and his dwelling-place together, we get lessons that may well shape our individual lives.

So let me ask you to look, in the first place, at—

I. THE SAD AND SUPERFICIAL TEACHING OF THE PREACHER.

Now, in reading this book of Ecclesiastes—which I am afraid a great many people do not read at all—we have always to remember that the wild things and the bitter things which the Preacher is saying

so abundantly through its course do not represent his ultimate convictions, but thoughts that he took up in his progress from error to truth. His first word is: "All is vanity." That conviction had been set vibrating in his heart, as it is set vibrating in the heart of every man who does as he did, viz., seeks for solid good away from God. That is his starting-point. It is not true. All is not vanity, except to some *blasé* cynic, made cynical by the failure of his voluptuousness, and to whom "all things here are out of joint," and everything looks yellow because his own biliary system is out of order. That is the beginning of the book, and there are hosts of other things in the course of it as one-sided, as cynically bitter, and therefore superficial. But the end of it is, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." In his journey from the one point to the other my text is the first step. "One generation goeth, and another cometh: the earth abideth for ever."

He looks out upon humanity, and sees that in one aspect the world is full of births, and in another full of deaths. Coffins and cradles seem the main furniture, and he hears the tramp, tramp, tramp, of the generations passing over a soil honeycombed with tombs, and therefore ringing hollow to their tread. All depends on the point of view. The

strange history of humanity is like a piece of shot silk; hold it at one angle, and you see dark purple, hold at another, and you see bright golden tints. Look from one point of view, and it seems a long history of vanishing generations. Look to the rear of the procession, and it seems a buoyant spectacle of eager, young faces pressing forwards on the march, and of strong feet treading the new road. But yet the total effect of that endless procession is to impress on the observer the transiency of humanity. And that wholesome thought is made more poignant still by the comparison which the writer here draws between the fleeting generations and the abiding earth. Man is the lord of earth, and can mould it to his purpose, but it remains and he passes. He is but a lodger in an old house that has had generations of tenants, each of whom has said for a while, "It is mine"; and they all have drifted away, and the house stands. The Alps, over which Hannibal stormed, over which the Goths poured down on the fertile plains of Lombardy, through whose passes mediæval emperors led their forces, over whose summits Napoleon brought his men, through whose bowels this generation has burrowed its tunnels, stand the same, and smile the same, amid their snows at the transient creatures that have crawled across them. The primrose on the rock blooms in the same place year after year,

and Nature and it are faithful to their covenant, but the poet's eyes that fell upon them are sealed with dust. Generations have gone, the transient flower remains. "One generation cometh and another goeth," and the tragedy is made more tragical because the stage stands unaltered, and the earth abides for ever. That is what sense has to say—"the foolish senses"—and that is all that sense has to say. Is it all that can be said? If it is, then the preacher's bitter conclusion is true, and "all is vanity and chasing after wind."

He immediately proceeds to draw from this undeniable, but, as I maintain, partial fact, the broad conclusion which cannot be rebutted, if you accept what he has said in my text as being the sufficient and complete account of man and his dwelling-place. If, says he, it is true that one generation comes and another goes, and the earth abides for ever, and if that is all that has to be said, then all things are full of labour. There is immense activity, and there is no progress; it is all rotatory motion round and round and round, and the same objects re-appear duly and punctually as the wheel revolves, and life is futile. Yes; so it is unless there is something more to be said, and the life that is thus futile is also, as it seems to me, inexplicable if you believe in God at all. If man, being what he is, is wholly subject to that law of mutation

and decay, then not only is he made "a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death," but he is also inferior to that persistent, old mother-earth from whose bosom he has come. If all that you have to say of him is, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," then life is futile, and God is not vindicated for having produced it.

And there is another consequence that follows, if this is all that we have got to say. If the cynical wisdom of Ecclesiastes is the ultimate word, then I do not assert that morality is destroyed, because right and wrong are not dependent either upon the belief in a God, or on the belief in immortality. But I do say that to declare that the fleeting, transient life of earth is all does strike a staggering blow at all noble ethics and paralyses a great deal of the highest forms of human activity, and that, as has historically been the case, so on the large scale, and, speaking generally, it will be the case, that the man whose creed is only "To-morrow we die" will very speedily draw the conclusion, "Let us eat and drink," and sensuous delights and the lower side of his nature will become dominant.

So, then, the Preacher had not got to the bottom of all things, either in his initial conviction that all was vanity, or in that which he laid down as the first step towards establishing that, that man passes and the earth abides. There is more to be said; the

sad, superficial teaching of the Preacher needs to be supplemented.

Now, turn for a moment to what does supplement it.

II. THE JOYOUS AND PROFOUNDER TEACHING OF THE APOSTLE.

The cynic never sees the depths ; that is reserved for the mystical eye of the lover. So John says : " No, no ; that is not all. Here is the true state of affairs : ' The world passeth away, and the lust thereof : but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.' " The doctrine of the passing generations and the abiding earth is fronted squarely in my second text by the not contradictory, but complementary, doctrine of the passing world and the abiding men. I do not suppose that John had this verse of Ecclesiastes in his mind, for the word " abide " is one of his favourite expressions, and is always cropping up. But even though he had not, we find in his utterance the necessary correction to the first text. As I have said, and now need not do more than repeat in a sentence, the antithesis is not so complete as it seems. John's " world " is not the preacher's " earth," but he means thereby, as we all know, the aggregate of created things, including men, considered apart from God, and in so far as it includes voluntary agents set in opposition to God and the will of God. He means the earth rent away from

God, and turned to be what it was not meant to be, a minister of evil, and he means men, in so far as they have parted themselves from God and make up an alien, if not a positively antagonistic, company.

Perhaps he was referring in the words of our text, to the break-up of the existing order of things which he discerned as impending and already begun to take effect in consequence of the coming of Jesus Christ, the shining of the true Light. For you may remember that in a previous part of the epistle he uses precisely the same expression, with a significant variation. Here, in our text, he says, "The world passeth away"; there he says, "The darkness has passed and the true light now shineth." He sees a process installed and going on, in which the whole solid-seeming fabric of a godless society is being dissolved and melted away. And, says he, in the midst of all this change there is one who stands unchanged, the man that does God's will.

But just for a moment we may take the lower point of view, and see here a flat contradiction of the Preacher. He said, "Men go, and the world abides." "No," says John; "your own psalmists might have taught you better: 'As a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed.'" The world, the earth, which seems so solid and permanent, is all the while in perpetual flux, as our later science has taught us, in a sense of which neither Preacher

nor apostle could dream. For just as from the beginning, forces were at work which out of the fire-mist shaped sun and planets, so the same forces, continuing in operation, are tending towards the end of the system which they began; and a contracting sun and a diminished light and a lowered temperature and the narrower orbits in which the planets shall revolve, prophesy that "the elements shall melt with fervent heat," and that all things which have been made must one day cease to be. Nature is the true Penelope's web, ever being woven and ever being unravelled, and in the most purely physical and scientific sense the world is passing away. But then, because you and I belong, in a segment of our being, to that which thus is passing away, we come under the same laws, and all that has been born must die. So the generations come, and in their very coming bear the prophecy of their going. But, on the other hand, there is an inner nucleus of our being, of which the material is but the transient envelope and periphery, which holds not of the material, but of the spiritual, and that abides for ever.

But let us lift the thought rather into the region of the true antithesis which John was contemplating, which is not so much the crumbling away of the material, and the endurance of the spiritual, as the essential transiency of everything that is in antagonism

to the will of God, and the essential eternity of everything which is in conformity with that will. And so, says he, "The world is passing, and the lust thereof." The desires that grasp it perish with it, or perhaps more truly still, the object of the desire perishes, and with it the possibility of their gratification ceases, but the desire itself remains. But what of the man whose life has been devoted to the things seen and temporal, when he finds himself in a condition of Being where none of these have accompanied him? Nothing to slake his lusts, if he be a sensualist. No money-bags, ledgers, or cheque-books if he be a plutocrat or a capitalist or a miser. No books or dictionaries if he be a mere student. Nothing of his vocations if he lived for "the world." But yet the appetite is abiding. Will that not be a thirst that cannot be slaked?

The world is passing and the lust thereof, and all that is antagonistic to God, or separated from Him, is essentially as "a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanishes away," whereas the man who does the will of God abideth for ever, in that he is steadfast in the midst of change.

His hand the good man fastens on the skies,
And lets earth roll, nor heeds its idle whirl.

He shall "abide for ever," in the sense that his

work is perpetual. In one very deep and solemn sense, nothing human ever dies, but in another all that is not running in the same direction as, and borne along by the impulse of, the will of God, is destined to be neutralised and brought to nothing at last. There may be a row of figures as long as to reach from here to the fixed stars, but if there is not in front of them the significant digit, which comes from obedience to the will of God, all is but a string of cyphers, and their net result is nothing. And he "abideth for ever," in the most blessed and profound sense, in that through his faith, which has kindled his love, and his love which has set in motion his practical obedience, he becomes participant of the very eternity of the living God. "This is eternal life," not merely "to know," but to do the will of our Father. Nothing else will last, and nothing else will prosper, any more than a bit of driftwood can stem Niagara. Unite yourself with the will of God, and you abide.

And now let me, as briefly as I can, throw together—

III. THE PLAIN, PRACTICAL LESSONS THAT COME FROM BOTH THESE TEXTS.

May I say, without seeming to be morbid or unpractical, one lesson is that we should cultivate a sense of the transiency of this outward life? One of our old authors says somewhere, that it is wholesome to smell at a piece of turf from a churchyard.

I know that much harm has been done by representing Christianity as mainly a scheme which is to secure man a peaceful death, and that many morbid forms of piety have given far too large a place to the contemplation of skulls and cross-bones. But for all that, the remembrance of death present in our lives will often lay a cool hand upon a throbbing brow ; and, like a bit of ice used by a skilful physician, will bring down the temperature, and stay the too tumultuous beating of the heart. "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts to wisdom." It will minister energy, and lead us to say, like our Lord, "We must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day ; the night cometh."

Let me say again—a very plain, practical lesson is to dig deep down for our foundations below the rubbish that has accumulated. If a man wishes to build a house in Rome or in Jerusalem he has to go fifty or sixty feet down, through potsherds and broken tiles and triturated marbles, and the dust of ancient palaces and temples. We have to drive a shaft clear down through all the superficial strata, and to lay the first stones on the Rock of Ages. Do not build on that which quivers and shakes beneath you. Do not try to make your life's path across the weeds, or as they call it in Egypt, the "sudd," that floats on the surface of the Nile, compacted

for many a mile, and yet only a film on the surface of the river, to be swept away some day. Build on God.

And the last lesson is, let us see to it that our wills are in harmony with His, and the work of our hands His work. We can do that will in all the secularities of our daily life. The difference between the work that shrivels up and disappears and the work that abides is not so much in its external character, or in the materials on which it is expended, as in the motive from which it comes. So that, if I might so say, if two women are sitting at the same millstone face to face, and turning round the same handle, one of them for one half the circumference, and the other for the other, and grinding out the same corn, the one's work may be "gold, silver, precious stones," which shall abide the trying fire; and the other's may be "wood, hay, stubble," which shall be burnt up. He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

So let us set ourselves, dear friends, to our several tasks for this coming year. Never mind about the century, it will take care of itself. Do your little work in your little corner, and be sure of this, that amidst changes you will stand unchanged, amidst tumults you may stand calm, in death you will be entering on a fuller life, and that what to others is the end will be to you the beginning. "If any man's

work abide, he shall receive a reward," and he himself shall abide with the abiding God.

The bitter cynic saw half the truth when he said, "One generation goeth, and another cometh : but the earth abides." The mystic apostle saw the truth steadily, and saw it whole when he said, "No, the world passeth away, and the lust thereof : but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

A Threefold Disease and a Twofold Cure

I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against Me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against Me.—JEREMIAH xxxiii. 8.

JEREMIAH was a prisoner in the palace of the last King of Judah. The long, national tragedy had reached almost the last scene of the last act. The besiegers were drawing their net closer round the doomed city. The prophet never faltered in predicting its fall, but he as uniformly pointed to a period behind the impending ruin, when all should be peace and joy. His song was modulated from a saddened minor to triumphant jubilation. In the beginning of this chapter he has declared that the final struggles of the besieged will only end in filling the land with their corpses, and then, from that lowest depth, he soars in a burst of lyrical prophecy conceived in the highest poetic style. The exiles shall return, the city shall be rebuilt, its desolate

streets shall ring with hymns of praise and the voices of the bridegroom and the bride. The land shall be peopled with peaceful husbandmen, and white with flocks. There shall be again a King upon the throne ; sacrifices shall again be offered. "In those days, and at that time, will I cause the branch of righteousness to grow up unto David. . . . In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely ; and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, the Lord our righteousness." That fair vision of the future begins with the offer of healing and cure, and with the exuberant promise of my text. The first thing to be dealt with was Judah's sin ; and that being taken away, all good and blessing would start into being, as flowerets will spring when the baleful shadow of some poisonous tree is removed. Now, my text at first reading seems to expend a great many unnecessary words in saying the same thing over and over again, but the accumulation of synonyms not only emphasises the completeness of the promise, but also presents different aspects of that promise. And it is to these that I crave your attention in this sermon. The great words of my text are as true a gospel for us—and as much needed by us, God knows!—as they were for Jeremiah's contemporaries ; and we can understand them better than either he or they did, because the days that were to come then have come now, and the King

who was to reign in righteousness is reigning to-day, and His Name is Christ. My object now is, as simply as I can, to draw your attention to the two points in this text: a threefold view of our sad condition and a twofold bright hope.

Now for the first of these. There is here

I. A THREEFOLD VIEW OF THE SAD CONDITION OF HUMANITY.

Observe the recurrence of the same idea in our text in different words. "Their iniquity whereby they have sinned against Me." . . . "Their iniquity whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against Me." You see there are three expressions which roughly may be taken as referring to the same ugly fact, but yet not meaning quite the same—"iniquity, or iniquities, sin, transgression." These three all speak about the same sad element in your experience and mine, but they speak about it from somewhat different points of view, and I wish to try to bring out that difference for you.

Suppose three men are set to describe a snake. One of them fixes his attention on its slimy coils, and describes its sinuous gliding movements. Another of them is fascinated by its wicked beauty, and talks about its livid markings, and its glittering eye. The third thinks only of the swift-darting fangs, and of the poison-glands. They all three describe the snake, but they describe it from different points

of view, and so it is here. "Iniquity," "sin," "transgression" are synonyms to some extent, but they do not cover the same ground. They look at the serpent from different points of view.

First, a sinful life is a twisted or warped life. The word rendered "iniquity," in the Old Testament, in all probability, literally means something that is not straight; that is bent, or, as I said, twisted or warped. That is a metaphor that runs through a great many languages. I suppose "right" expresses a corresponding image, and means that which is straight and direct; and I suppose that "wrong" has something to do with "wrung"—that which has been forcibly diverted from a right line. We all know the conventional colloquialism about a man being "straight," and such-and-such a thing being "on the straight." All sin is a twisting of the man from his proper course. Now there underlies that metaphor the notion that there is a certain line to which we are to conform. The schoolmaster draws a firm, straight line in the child's copybook; and then the little unaccustomed hand takes up on the second line its attempt, and makes tremulous, wavering pot-hooks and hangers. There is a copyhead for us, and our writing is, alas! all uneven and irregular, as well as blurred and blotted. There is a law, and you know it. You carry in yourself—I was going to say, the standard measure, and you can see whether

when you put your life by the side of that, the two coincide. It is not for me to say ; I know about my own, and you may know about yours, if you will be honest. The warped life belongs to us all.

The metaphor may suggest another illustration. The Tzar of Russia was once asked what should be the course of the railway from St. Petersburg to Moscow, and he took up a ruler and drew a straight line upon the chart, and said, "There ; that is the course." There is a straight road marked out for us all, going, like the old Roman roads, irrespective of physical difficulties in the contour of the country, climbing right over the Alps if necessary, and plunging down into the deepest valleys, never deflecting one hair's breath, but going straight to its aim. And we—what are we? what are "our crooked, wandering ways in which we live," by the side of that straight path? This very prophet has a wonderful illustration, in which he compares the lives of men who have departed from God to the racing about in the wilderness of a wild dromedary, "entangling her ways," as he says, crossing and recrossing, and getting into a maze of perplexity. Ah, my friend, is that not something like your life? Here is a straight road, and there are the devious footpaths that we have made, with many a detour, many a bend, many a coming back instead of going forward. "The labour of the foolish wearieth

every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city." All sin is deflection from the straight road, and we are all guilty of that.

Let me ask you, if you never have done it before, do it now; or, better, when you are alone by yourselves, let me ask you, to consult the standard that you carry within yourselves. It is easy to imagine that a line is straight. But did you ever see the point of a needle under a microscope? However finely it is polished, and apparently regularly tapering, the scrutinising investigation of the microscope shows that it is all rough and irregular. What would a builder do if he had not a T-square and a level? His wall would be ever so far out, whilst he thought it perfectly perpendicular. And remember that a line at a very acute angle of deflection only needs to be carried out far enough to diverge so widely from the other line that you could put the whole solar system in between the two. The smallest departure from the line of right will end, unless it is checked, away out in the regions of darkness beyond. That is the lesson of the first of the words here.

The second of them, rendered in our version "sin," if I may recur to my former illustration, looks at the snake from a different point of view, and it declares that all sin misses the aim. The meaning of the word in the Original is simply "that which

misses its mark." And the meaning of the prevalent word in the New Testament for "sin" means, in accordance with the ethical wisdom of the Greek, the same thing. Now, there are two ways in which that thought may be looked at. Every wrong thing that we do misses the aim, if you consider what a man's aim ought to be. We have got a great deal wiser than the Puritans nowadays, and people make cheap reputations for advanced thought by depreciating their theology. We have not got beyond the first answer of the Shorter Catechism; "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever." That is the only aim which corresponds to our constitution, to our circumstances. A palæontologist will pick up part of a skeleton embedded in the rocks, and from the study of a bone or two will tell you whether that creature was meant to swim, or to fly, or to walk; whether its element was sea, or sky, or land. Our destination for God is as plainly stamped on heart, mind, will, practical powers, as is the destination of such a creature deducible from its skeleton. "Whose image and superscription hath it?" God's, stamped deep upon us all. And so, brother, whatever you win, unless you win God, you have missed the aim. Anything short of knowing Him and loving Him, serving Him, being filled and inspired by Him, is contrary to the destiny stamped upon us all. And if you have

won God, then, whatever other human prizes you may have missed, you have made the best of life. Unless He is yours, and you are His, you have made a miss, and if I might venture to add, a mess, of yourself and of your life.

Then there is another side to this. The solemn teaching of this word is not confined to that thought, but also opens out into this other, that all godlessness, all the low, sinful lives that so many of us live, miss the shabby aim which they set before themselves. I do not believe that any man or woman ever got as much good, even of the lowest kind, out of a wrong thing as they expected to get when they ventured on it. If they did, they got something else along with it that took all the guilt off the gingerbread. Take the lowest kind of gross evil—sins of lust or of drunkenness. Well, no doubt the physical satisfaction desired is secured. Yes ; and what about what comes after, in addition, that was not aimed at? The drunkard gets his pleasurable oblivion, his desired excitement. What about the corrugated liver, the palsied hand, the watery eye, the wrecked life, the broken hearts at home, and all the other accompaniments? There is an old Greek legend about a certain messenger that came to earth with a box, in which were all manner of pleasant gifts, and down at the bottom was a speckled pest that, when the box was emptied

crawled out into the sunshine and infected the land. That Pandora's box is like "the good things" that sin brings to men. You gain, perhaps, your advantage, and you get something that spoils it all. Is not that your experience? I do not deny that you may satisfy the lower desires in a godless life. I know only too well how hard it is to get people to have higher tastes, and how all we ministers of religion are spending our efforts in order to win people to love something better than the world can give them. I also know that, if I could get to the very deepest recess of your hearts, you would admit that pleasures or advantages that are complete, that is to say, that satisfy you all round, and that are lasting, and that can front conscience and God who is at the back of conscience, are not to be won on the paths of sin and godlessness.

There is an old story that speaks of a knight and his company who were travelling through a desert, and suddenly beheld a castle into which they were invited, and hospitably welcomed. A feast was spread before them, and they each ate and drank his fill. But as soon as they left the enchanted halls, they were as hungry as before they sat at the magic table. That is the kind of food that all our wrongdoing provides for us. "He feedeth on ashes," and hungers after he has fed. So, dear friends, learn this ancient wisdom, which is as true to-day as it

ever was ; and be sure of this, that there is only one course in this world which will give a man true, lasting satisfaction ; that there is only one life, the life of obedience to and love of God, about which, at the end, there will not need to be said, "This their way is their folly."

And now, further, there is yet another word here, carrying with it important lessons. The expression which is translated in our text "transgressed," literally means "rebelled." And the lesson of it is, that all sin is, however little we think it, a rebellion against God. That introduces a yet graver thought than either of the former have brought us face to face with. Behind the law is the Lawgiver. When we do wrong, we not only blunder, we not only go aside from the right line, we lift up ourselves against our Sovereign King, and we say, "Who is the Lord that we should serve Him? Our tongues are our own. Who is Lord over us? Let us break His bands asunder, and cast away His cords from us." There are crimes against law ; there are faults against one another. Sins are against God ; and, dear friends, though you do not realise it, this is plain truth, that the essence, the common characteristic, of all the acts which, as we have seen, are twisted and foolish, is that in them we are setting up another than the Lord our God to be our ruler. We are enthroning ourselves in His place. Do you not feel

that that is true, and that in some small thing in which you go wrong, the essence of it is that you are going to please yourself, no matter what duty—which is only a heathen name for God—says to you?

Does not that thought make all these apparently trivial and insignificant things terribly important? Treason is treason, no matter what the act by which it is expressed. It may be a little thing to haul down a union-jack from a flagstaff, or to tear off a barn-door a proclamation with the royal arms at the top of it, but it may be rebellion. And if it is, it is as bad as to turn out a hundred thousand men in the field, with arms in their hands. There are small faults; there are trivial crimes; there are no small sins. An ounce of arsenic is arsenic, just as much as a ton; and it is a poison just as surely.

Now I have enlarged perhaps unduly on this earlier part of my subject, and can but briefly turn to the second division which I suggested, viz.:

II. THE TWOFOLD BRIGHT HOPE WHICH SHINES THROUGH THIS DARKNESS.

“I will cleanse . . . I will pardon.”

If sin combines in itself all these characteristics that I have touched upon, then clearly there is guilt, and clearly there are stains; and the gracious promise of this text deals with both the one and the other.

“I will pardon.” What is pardon? Do not

limit it to the analogy of a criminal court. When the law of the land pardons, or rather when the administrator of the law pardons, that simply means that the penalty is suspended. But is that forgiveness? Certainly it is only a part of it, even if it is a part. What do you fathers and mothers do when you forgive your child? You may use the rod or you may not, that is a question of what is best for the child. Forgiveness does not lie in letting him off the punishment; but forgiveness lies in the flowing to the child, uninterrupted, of the love of the parent heart, and that is God's forgiveness. Penalties, some of them, remain—thank God for it! “Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though Thou tookest vengeance of their inventions,” and the chastisement was part of the sign of the forgiveness. The great penalty of all, which is separation from God, is taken away; but the essence of that pardon, which it is my blessed work to proclaim to all men, is, that in spite of the prodigal's rags and the stench of the sty, the Father's love is round about him. It is round about you, brother.

Do you need pardon? Do you not? What does conscience say? What does the sense of remorse that sometimes blesses you, though it tortures, say? There are tendencies in this generation, as always, but very strong at present, to ignore the fact that all sin must necessarily lead to tremendous consequences

of misery. It does so in this world, more or less. A man goes into another world as he left this one, and you and I believe—"after death, the judgment." Do you not require pardon? And how are you to get it? "Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree." Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died that the loving forgiveness of God might find its way to every heart, and might take all men to its bosom, whilst yet the righteousness of God remained untarnished. I know not any gospel that goes deep enough to touch the real sore place in human nature, except the gospel that says to you and me and all of us, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."

But forgiveness is not enough, for the worst results of past sin are the habits of sin which it leaves within us; so that we all need cleansing. Can we cleanse ourselves? Let experience answer. Did you ever try to cure yourself of some little trick of gesture, or manner, or speech? And did you not find out then how strong the trivial habit was? You never know the force of a current till you try to row against it. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin?" No; but God can change it for him. So, again, we say that Jesus Christ who died for the remission of sins that are past, lives that He may give to each of us His own blessed life and power, and so draw us from our evil, and invest

us with His good. Dear brother, I beseech you to look the fact in the face, of your rebellion, of your missing your aim, of your perverted life, and to ask yourself the question, "Can I deal either with the guilt of the past, or with the imperative tendency to weakness and sin in the future? You may have the leprous flesh made "like the flesh of a little child." You may have the stained robe washed and made lustrous "white in the blood of the Lamb." Pardon and cleansing are our two deepest needs. There is one hand from which we can receive them both, and one only. There is one condition on which we shall receive them, which is that we trust in Him, "who was crucified for our offences," and lives to hallow us into His own likeness.

The Divine Ideal of Salvation

Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.—
1 PETER i. 5.

THERE is a picture here which is somewhat obscured in our Authorised Version by the use of the expression “kept.” What that picture is will be plain to you, if I note that it is the same word which the Apostle Paul uses, when he is talking about the Governor under King Aretas who *guarded* the city of the Damascenes. It is the same word which the same apostle employs, with the same emblematical reference as here, when he speaks of the “peace of God” as guarding our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. That is to say, we are to think of some little undefended, unwalled village, which is made safe because a strong force is thrown into it. Peter thinks that every Christian man has enemies that he cannot beat back alone, and he thinks that every Christian man may have round him a ring of defence against which all

enemies will break and foam themselves away like waves against a lighthouse.

That is the first point. Another that is very familiar to you all, is the close connection of the words of my text with those preceding them—"an inheritance reserved in heaven for you who are kept" or guarded. That is to say, that the one Divine Power is working on both sides of the curtain, preserving the inheritance for the heirs, preserving the heirs for the inheritance. It will not fail them, they will not miss it. But the three-fold aspect of this double guarding by the power of God is our theme in this sermon. By, Through, Unto—these are the three aspects under which Peter describes the guarding which is the security of every Christian. He deals with its efficient cause or origin—"by the power of God." He deals with its condition—"through faith." He deals with its ultimate end—"unto salvation." Now, if we begin at the end we shall be going logically.

I. UNTO SALVATION.

I ask you Christian men and women, and others besides, to consider—the one for the deepening of their faith, and the other for still more important reasons—I ask you to consider what the guarding is for. It is "unto salvation." That was a new word and a new thought to Peter's readers, and just because it was new and strange they could not fully

work themselves into it, nor understand the sweep and the depth of it. Nor do any of us understand the sweep and the depth of it. You think that you know all about it, you have heard of it till you are weary, and, as on a worn sixpence, all the lettering is off it. But I wish to bring back some of the morning freshness to that great thought that rose upon the darkened world, in the early days of Christianity.

A bit of seaweed as long as it is in the ocean has the wavelets expanding its delicate fronds and brightening its sober colouring. Lift it out and it is dim and dry. In like manner you have to take these commonplace Christian ideas, and plunge them into the ocean of meditation, so to speak, and they will open out into all their pristine beauty, and be filled with new power. Now, what does the New Testament mean by this word that is so stale to us? What the New Testament means is, first of all, making safe, and then making whole. It regards the previous condition of humanity under a double aspect. Men and women are suffering from disease, culminating in death—that is the diagnosis of humanity (very unfashionable to-day) which underlies the Christian conception of salvation—that men and women are in awful peril, and are drawing nigh to the gates of death, and that this salvation comes in to dissipate the danger and to root out the disease.

Do you accept in reality that view of humanity, and that view of yourselves which makes the message that you are safe a "gospel"? But there is another point to take into account. On the one hand, and negatively, this notion of salvation, in its Christian fulness and depth, means the deliverance from all sorts of evils, whether of sin or of sorrow; and on the other hand, and positively, it means the investing with all sorts of good, whether moral or material.

But that completeness of making safe and making whole is not all that lies in the word. Some think of salvation just as barring the gates of hell, enabling them to escape the consequences of their sins. But that is not the New Testament idea. We must be delivered from the danger, indeed, but we must also be invested with all the good. And, if you notice, the apostle, writing in my text, means by this salvation, which is the ultimate end of the Divine dealings, precisely the same thing as he meant a moment before by an "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled." By both salvation and inheritance he meant the same thing, and what was that? Possession of God. That is salvation, and that is the inheritance; and nobody understands the magnificent possibilities that lie in the initial Christian salvation unless, far beyond any escape from penal consequences, he has risen to the conception that the essence

of salvation is the possession of God. You may call that mysticism, but if your Christianity has not that element of mysticism in it, it has not got beyond the initial stage.

But notice still further that, in our text, the apostle is speaking about this great inheritance of salvation as a thing in the future. That, of course, I do not need to elaborate, but I do wish to draw your attention to the fact that, a verse or two afterwards, he regards it as being consequent upon the act of faith. He says, "Believing ye rejoice, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." So there is the salvation away ahead, beyond, to which all the operations of the Divine providence and of the Divine grace are conducting men. Ay, but the end of the rope is in my hand here, however far off may be the balloon, and the germ of that perfection in the heavens must be here to-day, in the experiences of earth. There is nothing else that corresponds to the facts of the Christian life here below, except that full future deliverance from all evil, and that entire investiture with all the good in God, that a human soul, capable of indefinite expansion, can gather into itself. There is nothing else that will correspond to the facts of the Christian life here except that.

If you look at a row of houses put up in some growing suburb, you will find often, that at

the end of the row, so far as it has gone already, there are protruding bricks. What do they mean? They mean that there is another house coming, and the facts of the Christian life here on earth, its greatness and its smallness, its failures and its successes, its moments of elevation and its moments of depression, all proclaim with one voice that this is not the adequate manifestation of the power that may be ours; that that which has been able to do so much, must be able to do infinitely more when it needs. The new moon with ragged edge, beautiful even in its imperfection, prophesies the placid completeness of the silver round, by every inequality on the line of present vision, and perfect future salvation is the only thing that corresponds to the present lives of Christian men. Yes, and it is the only thing that corresponds to the energies that have been brought into play in order to produce these lives. Entire deliverance from all evil, and investiture with all good is the end for which Jesus Christ came, and lived, and died. He is not going to be balked of the travail of His soul. Nothing else than that completing gift to all that believe on Him would be an adequate motive for Him to suffer, an adequate reward for Him who has suffered. Such complete salvation is the end of all God's discipline of us here, and nothing less would be an adequate explanation of His providence to us upon earth. God is not going

to be guilty of an undivine disproportion of means to an end ; and the means that He has set in motion are, the Incarnation and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the fatherliness of His providence and of His dealings with us, His guidance and His guardianship. They lead unto salvation.

II. BY THE POWER OF GOD.

So much, then, for the first part of our propositions. What we are guarded *for* leads next to what we are guarded *by*—"by the power of God." Now I am inclined to believe that there is another picture suggested there, and, if you will allow me a single expository remark, I will show cause for my belief: "Kept by the power of God." If we render quite literally, we shall say "Kept *in* the power of God." Though the "by" is a perfectly legitimate explanation of the apostle's meaning, do not you see how much more beauty and picturesque force is given, if we say "kept or guarded *in* the power of God," as if it were round about us, and we were there in the midst? "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it and is safe." "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High"—and that does not mean the secret place that belongs to the Most High, but the secret place that the Most High constitutes—"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide

under the shadow"—yes, of course he will ; if he is close in, he is sure to be below the shadow—"of the Almighty." Similarly, taking the same metaphor as is in my text, "The angel of the Lord" (not the angels), "the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and they are kept in the power."

When an army is marching through an enemy's country, they put the women and children and invalids in the centre, and then they are safe ; and that is where you and I will be safe—inserted into God, if I may venture upon such a phrase. It is not too strong a phrase ; it is not half so strong as the Master's "Abide in Me and I in you, for apart from Me ye"—not merely "can do," but "ye—*are* nothing."

Christ *for* us is the truth, the reception of which begins salvation. We have all to begin with looking upon that Saviour as the sacrifice for our sins, and that is introductory to our being able to comprehend Him as the indwelling Power of our lives, and as the Refuge in whom we have to abide. So, although it is, of course, true that the power of God is the instrument whereby we are kept, it is also true that the means whereby that power of God exercises its guarding influence is by bringing us within itself, and keeping Himself round us. For, let us never forget that the power of God guards the Christian

by means of the imparted Spirit of God, and, only in the degree in which we receive into ourselves that Divine influence, will it avail to preserve us from the evils that are without. The communication of strength to us to keep ourselves is the way by which the power of God keeps us, and, whilst for all strength to guard ourselves, we must ever be looking to Him, and drawing it from Him, that is not all we have to do, but rather we have to remember the command, "Keep yourselves in the love of God," as well as to fall back upon the blessed words, "Guarded by the power of God."

III. THROUGH FAITH.

And now, lastly, we have to consider, besides what we are guarded "for," and what we are guarded "by," what we are guarded "through." "Through faith"; there you come to another word that has been so worn by use, that people have no definite notion attached to it. It would freshen many stale ideas if, instead of "Kept by the power of God through *faith*," we said, "Kept by the power of God through *trust*." That is the exact rendering of the New Testament idea. Some people say this teaching, that a man is saved by "faith," is a very immoral thing. Well, if salvation were a thing to be handed out over a counter to any person, irrespective altogether of what that person was—if it could be given as a medal is given to a child, then

the criticism might be true ; or, if the New Testament teaching were, that salvation was the result of evangelical belief, then the criticism would have a great deal of force in it, but neither of these two things is true. Faith is not belief, if, by belief you mean saying, " Yes, I assent and consent to this or that of thirty-nine articles or thirty-nine thousand " ; but faith is an act of the whole moral nature of a man, and there is Will in it, which there never ought to be in acts of belief. You ought not to believe intellectually as you choose. You must exercise faith by choosing. And, therefore, a broad distinction, which nobody can get over, lies between the mere acceptance of a creed, and the act of trust, in which the soul and the affections are brought into play quite as much as the understanding.

But there is another thing to be said, and that is, that faith which is the condition of salvation, has for its object, not a doctrine, but a person. You believe doctrines—you trust people, and you may believe Jesus Christ to all eternity, and it will bring you no salvation, but if you believe *on* Him, then you " rejoice with joy and gladness."

And there is yet another thing to be said on that. As *faith*, which is the condition of salvation, is not merely an act of the will, so *trust*, reposing upon a person and grappling him to one's heart, must also

have in it an inseparable element of self-abandonment. You put a seed into your gardens in the spring weather, and, after a little while, one little radicle strikes downward, and another little outgrowth comes upward ; the one is the root, and the other the stem of the future plant, but they both come out of that seed. Faith strikes upward, self-distrust strikes downward. No man ever comes to Jesus Christ, until he has been very near Despair, and has looked into its eyeballs. So the thing which is the condition of salvation is *trust*—trust in a person, accompanied with absolute self-distrust and abandonment.

That is the condition, and there is nothing arbitrary about the condition. If God could have saved the world without “faith,” He would have done it long since, and it is not of mere arbitrariness, but by the very necessities of the case, that salvation comes through faith and through nothing besides. Is it arbitrary that, if you do not take your medicine, you will not be cured? Is it arbitrary that, if you do not pull the trigger, the pistol will not go off? No more is it arbitrary that, without faith, no man shall see salvation. When Jesus Christ was here upon earth and visited a certain city, we read that “He could there do no mighty work because of their unbelief.” Ah ! Omnipotence may be hampered, and the Almighty arm may not have elbow-room to do its work because of our unbelief ; and I am

sure that, amongst us, there are some people who have thus thwarted and hampered the Omnipotent Power.

If we will do as this man Peter did, cry, "Lord, save me, I perish," the saving hand will come out. Would it have been arbitrary, had Peter been drowned, if he had not put out his hand to Christ? And that is all that you and I have to do, but we *have* to do it. Salvation here and hereafter is God's gift. It cannot be given without faith, but it is given to every man that exercises faith.

The Servant Lord and the Lord's Servants

He riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself. After that He poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded.—JOHN xiii. 4-5.

Yea, all of you gird yourselves with humility to serve one another.—1 PETER v. 5 (Revised Version).

JOHAN is the only evangelist who narrates the touching incident of foot-washing, but Luke records sayings which are best interpreted by supposing them connected with it. He speaks of a contention as to which should be greatest, which probably arose from each apostle desiring to shift from himself the menial task of washing the others' feet. Jesus is represented to have calmed the strife by laying down the great principle that the "greater" is to be "as the younger," and "he that is chief as he that doth serve." And then He goes on to ask, in words which seem to refer to the foot-washing, "Whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat or he that serveth?" and to add a word still more

obviously connected with that signal instance of loving self-abasement, "But I am in the midst of you as he that serveth." That the two narratives of Luke and John are occupied with the same set of facts, looked at from two different points of view, the one dealing with the incident, the other with its ethical significance as our pattern (which John does not omit, though he gives it briefly in a sentence, "As I have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet") is made more probable by the singular fact that Peter, in my second text and its context, combines a verbal reference to Luke's narrative and a manifest allusion to John's. Immediately before the text, he writes: "Ye younger, be subject unto the elder," which echo Luke's, "He that is chief among you, let him be as the younger"; and when he adds, "Yea, all of you gird yourselves with humility," he uses a word which occurs nowhere else in Scripture, and which means to fasten on the slave's apron. Does not that remind us of "He took a towel and girded Himself"? So, then, we have two pictures set before us by the combination of these two texts. The one, the Lord girt like a servant; and the other, the servants girt like their Lord. Let us look at these two points.

I. THE LORD GIRT LIKE A SERVANT.

Now, it is very remarkable to note the solemn prologue to this incident which John draws out

in the preceding verses, like some great avenue leading up to a temple or sanctuary. He gives at some length an insight into the motives that impelled our Lord to this unique display, and here they are: "When Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." That is to say, to bring it down to more prosaic words, the consciousness of impending separation touched the Lord's own heart—so human was He—and made Him feel, as no doubt you and I have often felt when parting from some one that is dear to us, the yearning to put our whole love—which, perhaps, we had shyly and embarrassedly kept in the background all the time that we were together—into some act that might, as by the withdrawal of a curtain, let out to sight for one last instant, that love which had long been hidden. I suppose that for the relief of His own heart, on which the shadow of impending separation had fallen, and had stimulated the human desire in Him to leave a last memory of Himself, more than ordinarily tender and sweet, Jesus thus made Himself the servant of the twelve. It was because He "knew that His hour had come," that His love cast itself into this ever-memorable and heart-melting form. But there was another motive at work. For never did He indulge in any human

emotion, however natural or sweet to Himself, without thinking of its effect on others. And just as we have often desired that we might leave dear ones some token which would successfully fight against the attrition of present circumstances obliterating the image of ourselves from their hearts, so Christ, by this act of unexampled self-abasement, said to the wondering apostles, "This do in remembrance of Me." He longed to show them His love, and He wished them to remember and to imitate His love. And so, "Knowing that His hour was come, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them to the end."

But that is not all. John has more to say in the way of analysing motives. For he goes on, "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God, He riseth from supper," etc. The consciousness of supreme dignity, of universal sovereignty, of eternal pre-existence, and of return to the glory which He had with the Father before the world was : these things were the reasons for the denuding Himself of His garments, girding on the slave's towel, and taking the basin and washing the disciples' feet. After such a preamble we might have expected something very different. "Knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God,

and went to God"—He did what one would have expected looking from the human point of view? "Manifested forth His glory," flashed out His power? No; for when you take up the gospels, and eminently John's gospel, the spiritual one of the four, you always find that two things go together—some great humiliation and some lofty manifestation of sovereign and Divine dignity. And so here, the expression of the consciousness of sovereign authority is the assumption of the slave's ignominious garb and repulsive office. What more heart-moving illustration could have been given than that, in the realm of Christ, the true expression of superiority is lowliness, the meaning of dignity, service? What force is given to the words recorded by Luke, if we recognise in them a commentary on the act recorded by John!

But let us turn for a moment to the act itself. Notice that slow accumulation of descriptive clauses, breaking up the deed into so many steps, each more wonderful than the one before it. As we listen to John telling the details one by one, do we not see him and the others sitting in speechless astonishment, gazing at Jesus, and wondering what is to come next? "He riseth from supper." We do not know whether it was before or after the institution of the Lord's Supper. It seems to me to be equally striking, whether you put it prior or subsequent to that solemn appointment of a permanent memorial

rite. "He riseth from supper," and as they looked He divested Himself of His garments. They gazed at one another, and thought, "What is He about to do?" He took the towel of the slave, "and girded Himself, and poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet." What a sequence! And how the separation of the one complex act into its stages deepens its pathos and beauty, and increases its power upon us!

But, mark that the purpose of it all is service. Because "the Father had given all into His hands, . . . He took the basin." Because "He had come from God, and was going to God, He girded Himself," with the slave's towel. Service—that is the key-word for life, for Christ, and for all His followers. And mark, further, that it is service in order to cleanse. The episode which follows as to Peter and his reluctance is by no means an excrescence upon the story, but the ideas that are expressed there in symbolical form were part of the ideas which were present in our Lord's mind from the beginning of the incident. He took the basin—for, after all, the highest thing that He does for us, or, at least, the initial act, without which He can do nothing else for any of us, is that He serves us by cleansing us.

And so, this picture that is here of the Lord girded like the servant may be taken, not fancifully, but

in sober exposition, as a symbol, or a parable, if you like, of His whole work. "He riseth from"—not "supper," but the throne that He filled from everlasting; "and laid aside His garments"—"the glory that He had with the Father before the world was"; "and girded Himself with a towel"—"being found in fashion as a Man, and putting on the vile vesture of our poor humanity," and "becoming obedient." "He took a bason"—what is in the basin? Not water only, but water and blood—"and began to wash the disciples' feet." All which He did in outward form, and for one brief hour in that upper chamber, was but the picture of what He did when He stooped to earth, and of what He is doing when He has ascended where He was before; and taken His garment, and seated Himself on the throne again. He says to us, "Know ye what I have done to you? I have given you an example. If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet."

II. THE SERVANTS GIRT LIKE THEIR LORD.

As I have said, the Revised Version, in its rendering, brings out more distinctly than the Authorised Version does, Peter's allusion to the incident in John. Instead of rendering, as the Authorised Version does, "Be ye clothed with humility," it gives, "All of you gird yourselves with humility to serve one another." I have already said, and so

I need not do more than just in a sentence reiterate it, that Peter uses here a very remarkable and expressive word, which describes the putting on of the white apron which was the slave's badge, as to some extent it is amongst ourselves the mark of servitude. Surely he was thinking about the incident recorded by John !

May I say a word about that often-spoken-about and not often-practised virtue? "Gird yourselves with humility." That does not mean, "Be blind to what you can do." It does not mean, "Pretend to think very lowly of your own power." A man may be perfectly humble and yet have a very clear conception that he can do certain things much better than his brother at his side. There is nothing contrary to the spirit of Christian humility, but it is an essential part of that grace, that a man should know his own worth, his own faculty, his own capacity. And if he can do a thing better than other people, there is no reason in the world why he should not think so, though it may not be always a wise thing to say it. Humility does not consist in undue depreciation of myself, but in a lowly estimate of myself, joined with as lowly and accurate a knowledge of myself as I can get. Granted that you are superior to me in something or other. Well, what does that matter? One molehill is a little higher than another ; they are all about the same

distance from the sun. I remember a friend of mine who, when a child, being told that the sun was ninety-five millions of miles off, asked whether it was from the upstairs window or the downstairs. And that is about the difference between men, if they will bring themselves into comparison with the only true standard.

There are two things that Christian people ought always to have before them ; and either of them will pull down all self-complacency. One is, what they have within their own hearts, as they know, along with all the excellences that may be there ; and the other is, what they ought to be, as they know, namely, what their Master was. These two thoughts will clip the wings of high-flying complacency, and prune the rank growth of self-conceit. Every one of us knows that if we were turned inside out before the world, we could not look the world in the face. And every one of us knows that if we put ourselves by the side of that dear Lord, all that would be left to us would be to fall upon our faces, to put our hands upon our mouths, and our mouths in the dust, and cry, "Unclean ! unclean !" Such, then, is the medicine for high thoughts of self.

But there is another thing I would like to say. Christian humility is not a mere lowly estimate of myself, but it is such an estimate as leads to lowly service. Peter puts it, "Be ye girt with humility"

—the white apron over all the rich dress, be it as rich as it may, over velvet skirts, over emblazoned garniture—“to serve one another.” True humility is not a mere sentiment, still less is it self-depreciating talk, which is too often but a trap to catch flattery from the hearer. If it is genuine, it will show itself in counting no office too lowly that may help a brother. “Thy soul was like a star and dwelt apart,” says Wordsworth of Milton, the austere poet, whom many would think of as by no means eminent for humility, but yet, as the sonnet goes on to say, “Thy soul the humblest duties on herself did lay,” and that is the token of genuine humility. It will usually be found that people who think of themselves more highly than they ought to think, are slow to use the powers, of which they are so proud, for their brethren, and you may be sure that people who think very humbly of themselves are generally the most ready to help all that need help. Humility and service will go together.

There is a kind of humility very common, and altogether spurious—that which shirks service on the plea of incapacity. “Oh! I am not fit for work of that sort. I cannot undertake such responsible occupation.” That is Laziness or Indifference masquerading in the robe of Diffidence. The humility that is genuine is ready to serve, and do its little possible, for the brotherhood.

Let us be awed and stimulated by remembering that "As I have done to you" is at once the pattern and the motive for such a life. Ah! brethren, it is in the measure in which they submit themselves to that cleansing grace, and take into their hearts what Jesus Christ has been, and done for them, that the servants will gird themselves like their Lord. To such a servant is given Christ's wonderful promise: "Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, He will make them to sit down to meat and will gird Himself" once more, "and come forth and serve them."

The Boy in the Temple

And He said unto them, How is it that ye sought Me? wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?—LUKE ii. 49.

A NUMBER of spurious gospels have come down to us, which are full of stories, most of them absurd and some of them worse, about the infancy of Jesus Christ. Their puerilities bring out more distinctly the simplicity, the nobleness, the worthiness of this one solitary incident of His early days which has been preserved for us. How has it been preserved? If you will look over the narratives there will be very little difficulty, I think, in answering that question. Observing the prominence that is given to the parents, and how the story enlarges upon what they thought and felt, we shall not have much doubt in accepting the hypothesis that it was none other than Mary from whom Luke received such intimate details. Notice, for instance, "Joseph and His mother knew not of it." "They supposed Him to have been in the company." "And when they," *i.e.*, Joseph and Mary, "saw Him, they were

astonished ” ; and then that final touch, “ He was subject to them,” as if His mother would not have Luke or us think that this one act of independence meant that He had shaken off parental authority. And is it not a mother’s voice that says, “ His mother kept all these things in her heart,” and pondered all the traits of boyhood? Now it seems to me that, in these words of the twelve-year-old boy, there are two or three points full of interest and of teaching for us. There is—

I. THAT CONSCIOUSNESS OF SONSHIP.

I am not going to plunge into a subject on which certainly a great deal has been very confidently affirmed, and about which the less is dogmatised by us, who must know next to nothing about it the better, viz., the inter-connection of the human and the Divine elements in the person of Jesus Christ. But the context leads us straight to this thought—that there was in Jesus distinct growth in wisdom as well as in stature, and in favour with God and man. And now, suppose the peasant boy brought up to Jerusalem, seeing it for the first time, and for the first time entering the sacred courts of the Temple. Remember, that to a Jewish boy, reaching the age of twelve made an epoch, because He then became “ a Son of the law,” and took upon Himself the religious responsibilities which had hitherto devolved upon his parents. If we will take that

into account, and remember that it was a true manhood which was growing up in the boy Jesus, then we shall not feel it to be irreverent if we venture to say, not that here and then, there began His consciousness of His Divine Sonship, but that that visit made an epoch and a stage in the development of that consciousness, just because it furthered the growth of His manhood.

Further, our Lord in these words, in the gentlest possible way, and yet most decisively, does what He did in all His intercourse with Mary, so far as it is recorded for us in Scripture—relegated her back within limits beyond which she tended to advance. For she said, “Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing,” no doubt thus preserving what had been the usual form of speech in the household for all the previous years; and there is an emphasis that would fall upon her heart, as it fell upon none other, when He answered: “Wist ye not that I must be about My Father’s business?” We are not warranted in affirming that the child meant all which the man afterwards meant by the claim to be the Son of God; nor are we any more warranted in denying that He did. We know too little about the mysteries of His growth to venture on definite statements of either kind. Our sounding-lines are not long enough to touch bottom in this great word from the lips of a boy of twelve; but this is clear, that as He grew

into self-consciousness, there came with it the growing consciousness of His Sonship to His Father in Heaven.

Now, dear brethren, whilst all that is unique, and parts Him off from us, do not let us forget that that same sense of Sonship and Fatherhood must be the very deepest thing in us, if we are Christian people after Christ's pattern. We, too, can be sons through Him, and only through Him. I believe with all my heart in what we hear so much about now—"the universal Fatherhood of God." But I believe that there is also a special relation of Fatherhood and Sonship, which is constituted only, according to Scripture teaching in my apprehension, through faith in Jesus Christ, and the reception of His life as a supernatural life into our souls. God is Father of all men,—thank God for it! And that means, that He gives life to all men; that in a very deep and precious sense the life which He gives to every man is not only derived from, but is kindred with, His own; and it means that His love reaches to all men, and that His authority extends over them. But there is an inner sanctuary. There is a better life than the life of nature, and the Fatherhood into which Christ introduces us means, that through faith in Him, and the entrance into our spirits of the Spirit of adoption, we receive a life derived from, and kindred with, the life of the Giver, and that we are

bound to Him not only by the cords of love, but to obey the parental authority. Sonship is the deepest thought about the Christian life.

It was an entirely new thought when Jesus spoke to His disciples of their Father in Heaven. It was a thrilling novelty when Paul bade servile worshippers realise that they were no longer slaves, but sons, and, as such, heirs of God. It was the rapture of pointing to a new star flaming out, as it were, that swelled in John's exclamation: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God!" For even though in the Old Testament there are a few occasional references to Israel's King or to Israel itself as being "God's son," as far as I remember, there is only one reference in all the Old Testament to parental love towards each of us on the part of God, and that is the great saying in the 103rd Psalm: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." For the most part the idea connected in the Old Testament with the Fatherhood of God is authority: "If I be a Father, where is Mine honour?" says the last of the prophets. But when we pass into the New, on the very threshold, here we get the germ, in these words, of the blessed thought that, as His disciples, we, too, may claim sonship to God through Him, and penetrate beyond the awe of Divine Majesty into the love of our Father God. Brethren, notwithstanding all that was unique

in the Sonship of Jesus Christ, He welcomes us to a place beside Himself, and if we are the children of God by faith in Him, "then are we heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."

Now the second thought that I would suggest from these words is

II. THE SWEET "MUST" OF FILIAL DUTY.

"How is it that ye sought Me?" That means: "Did you not know where I should be sure to be? What need was there to go up and down Jerusalem looking for me? You might have known there was only one place where you would find Me. Wist ye not that I *must* be about My Father's business?" Now, the last words of this question are in the Greek literally, as the margin of the Revised Version tells us, "in the things of My Father"; and that idiomatic form of speech may either be taken to mean, as the Authorised Version does, "about My Father's business," or, with the Revised Version, "in My Father's house." The latter seems the rendering most relevant in this connection, where the folly of seeking is emphasised—the certainty of His place is more to the point than that of His occupation. But the locality carried the occupation with it, for why must He be in the Father's house but to be about the Father's business, "to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in His temple"?

Do people know where to find us? Is it unnecessary

to go hunting for us? Is there a place where it is certain that we shall be? It was so with this child Jesus, and it should be so with all of us who profess to be His followers.

All through Christ's life there runs, and occasionally comes into utterance, that sense of a divine necessity laid upon Him ; and here is the beginning, the very first time that the word occurs on His lips, "I must." There is as divine and as real a necessity shaping our lives because it lies upon and moulds our wills, if we have the child's heart, and stand in the child's position. In Jesus Christ the "must" was not an external one, but He "must be about His Father's business," because His whole inclination and will was submitted to the Father's authority. And that is what will make any life sweet, calm, noble. "The love of Christ constraineth us." There is a necessity which presses upon men like iron fetters ; there is a necessity which wells up within a man a fountain of life, and does not so much drive as sweetly incline the will, so that it is impossible for him to be other than a loving, obedient child.

Dear friend, have we felt the joyful grip of that necessity? Is it impossible for me not to be doing God's will? Do I feel myself laid hold of by a strong, loving hand that propels me, not unwillingly, along the path? Does inclination coincide with

obligation? If it does, then no words can tell the freedom, the enlargement, the calmness, the deep blessedness of such a life. But when these pull in two different ways, as, alas! they often do, and I have to say, "I must be about my Father's business, and I had rather be about my own if I durst," which is the condition of a great many so-called Christian people—then the necessity is miserable; and slavery, not freedom, is the characteristic of such Christianity. And there is a great deal of such to-day.

And now one last word. On this sweet "must," and blessed compulsion to be about the Father's business, there follows:

III. THE MEEK ACCEPTANCE OF THE LOWLIEST DUTIES.

"He went down to Nazareth, and was subject to them." That is all that is told us about eighteen years, by far the largest part of the earthly life of Christ. Legend comes in, and for once not inappropriately, and tells us, what is probably quite true, that during these years, Jesus worked in the carpenter's shop, and as one story says, "made yokes," or as another tells, made light implements of husbandry for the peasants round Nazareth. Be that as it may, "He was subject unto them," and that was doing the Father's will, and being "about the Father's business," quite as much as when He was amongst the doctors, and learning by asking

questions as well as by hearkening to their instructions. Everything depends on the motive. The commonest duty may be "the Father's business," when we are doing manfully the work of daily life. Only we do not turn common duty into the Father's business, unless we remember Him in the doing of it. But if we carry the hallowing and quickening influence of that great "must" into all the pettinesses, and paltrinesses, and wearinesses, and sorrows of our daily trivial lives, then we shall find, as Jesus Christ found, that the carpenter's shop is as sacred as the courts of the Temple, and that to obey Mary was to do the will of the Father in Heaven.

What a blessed transformation that would make of all lives! The psalmist long ago said: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life." We may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of our lives. We may be in one or other of the many mansions of the Father's house, wherever we go, and may be doing the will of the Father in Heaven, in all that we do. Then we shall be at rest; then we shall be strong; then we shall be pure; then we shall have deep in our hearts the joyous consciousness, undisturbed by rebellious wills, that now "we are the sons of God," and the still more joyous hope,

undimmed by doubts or mists, that "it doth not yet appear what we shall be"; but that wherever we go, it will be but passing from one room of the great home into another more glorious still. "I must be about my Father's business"; let us make that the motto for earth, and He will say to us in His own good time, "Come home from the field, and sit down beside Me in My house," and so we "shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

The Teaching God and His Scholars

Good and upright is the Lord: therefore will He teach sinners in the way. The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way.—PSALM xxv. 8-9.

THIS is one of the so-called Acrostic Psalms, in which the successive verses begin with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. It can easily be understood that a poet moving in fetters of that sort is necessarily obliged to make the connection of his thoughts sometimes rather loose, and in the Acrostic Psalms, as a whole, one very seldom finds that two consecutive verses have very close relation with one another. That makes the connection of thought in the words that I have read the more remarkable. You see that there is a very beautiful sequence. First of all, the psalmist lifts his eyes to heaven, and gets a great thought into his heart about God, and then he comes down to the world and he sees all its wickedness and evil, and he draws an inference from that thought about God,

very unlike the one that might naturally suggest itself. "Good and upright is the Lord"—so what will He do with sinners?—"therefore will He teach sinners His way."

But that is not all—that is not a wide, absolute, unconditioned promise, but the psalmist guards himself, and defines the conditions, as well as narrows the sweep, of the promise, in the next verse: "The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way." So there are three things here: a great thought about God, a confident trust built thereon, and the necessary conditions for the realisation of the trust.

I. A GREAT THOUGHT ABOUT GOD.

"Good and upright"—the one word covering the sweet, gracious, gentle, tender, loving, communicating, sustaining aspects of His character; the other passing by all the mere pompous "Omnisciences," "Omnipresences," "Omnipotences," and the like, and going right to the heart of the Divine nature. All that goodness is kept from being facile weakness because it is inseparably linked with uprightness, as some flowering plant is held aloft by a strong pole round which it twines.

Now these are the two sides of the Divine nature which it has always been hard, and for many people impossible, to unite in one thought. They are like some of those obstinate gases which may be brought

side by side, but will not blend unless you put an electric spark through them. The psalmist flashed his spark through them, and brought the two together. He bracketed them. He began with the goodness. The goodness is the basis of the uprightness, and righteousness is a mode of love. "Good and upright is the Lord." That is a grander thought than "He moves all things according to the purpose of His own will." That is a mightier thought than all these attributes to which I have referred, which are only the fringes and circumference of the Divine glory, the flaming heart of which lies in what I may call the benevolence and the morality of the Divine nature: the love and the rectitude. The difficulty of keeping these two thoughts together, seeing both of them at one time, is just as great to-day as ever it was. And the insisting on one of them without regard to the other lies at the bottom of a great many of the misconceptions, both about God and of Christianity, from which this generation is suffering. People say the Lord is good, and will talk by the yard about the Divine love; what they mean all the while is, "God is so good that He has no hatred of sin, and that there is no need for the cross, before His goodness can come to men and bless them." I believe that you cannot more assuredly degrade the thing that you fancy you are exalting, than by harping continually on the love

of God, and keeping your thumb on His righteousness. That is at the bottom of a great deal of the kicking against the New Testament teaching with which we are too familiar to-day. Hold by the righteousness, or you will debase the love; hold by the love, or you will never understand the righteousness. Keep the two things together. Parted, they give you a fragmentary God; joined, they give you all the glory of His name.

Let us come now to the next point that is here :

II. THE WONDERFUL HOPE, THE CONFIDENT TRUST THAT IS BUILT UPON THAT THOUGHT OF GOD.

“Good and upright is the Lord, therefore He will teach sinners in the way.” Ah! our own consciences do not draw that inference for us. We need something more than our own thoughts to rise to that height. If we say, “good and upright,” if we take the two aspects together, we cannot but feel that “sinner” suggests the impediment to the goodness which is uprightness, blessing and instructing us. But the psalmist had learnt—and the fact that he did learn it is the best proof of the “inspiration” of the Old Testament system—the psalmist had learnt that just because God was good, it was impossible that His attitude to us poor, sinful men down here should be anything else than that of trying to draw them back into His own paths and to teach them. Punish them? Yes. Hate the sin? Yes; but

teach the sinner. The righteousness of God, His love of righteousness, makes Him infinitely desirous of making men what He Himself is, and the purpose of Creation, and Revelation, and Redemption, and of all the discipline of life, and the providences of our days, is summed up in this, to teach sinners not only the way, but His way. God's love and God's righteousness combine to make it certain that what He desires most for all His creatures is that they should be conformed to Himself.

These are threadbare old truths, but if we understood and felt, as we ought to do, and as is the simple fact, that the one thing that God seeks to do for us all is to bring us to know, and to love, and to do that which is like His own righteousness, the whole world would be different for us. The more we felt our own evil, the more we should be sure that His patient, tender, continuous love was working upon us, in all sorts of ways, for the one purpose, to guide us "in judgment," that is, to bring us into the paths of righteousness, and to woo us back into the way everlasting, which is His way. It is practical morality, active righteousness, which is here meant; and the assurance is given to us that just because we, being sinners, need a higher teacher than conscience or emotion, and just because God is upright and good, therefore He will impart to us a righteousness, an uprightness kindred with His own.

And perhaps I am not too fanciful if I venture to say that the various words which the psalmist employs here for the processes of Divine instruction are full of significant teaching: "Therefore will He *teach* sinners in the way"—the word employed there for "teaching" literally means "to point," or to "throw" (the hand, that is), and it suggests the attitude of a man who, to some stranger that has lost his path, points in a certain direction and says, "There, that is your road, take that!" And so perhaps that first word suggests to us the daily providences by which, if we keep our eyes open, we shall, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, see the path made plain before us. And then the other word that follows, "the meek will He *guide*," suggests more than that. A man may be like a finger-post, and point his arm to the road, and then leave the traveller to take it. But the guide comes beside him and says, "Follow; step in my steps, and be sure that you keep close to my heels, and you will be in the right path." So we have, in addition to the providences which we are to interpret, the Christ whom we are not to interpret so much as to follow. "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Ah! there is the true guide, better than all providences. As John Stuart Mill said, you cannot have a better precept for practical life than just to do as Jesus Christ would have done in

your place. The wonder and beauty of that brief life are that we can apply it to lives so utterly different from His as ours are. He, a peasant in a Galilean village, knowing nothing of the complications of modern life, is yet for each of us our pattern, following whom we may be sure that we shall not walk in darkness. "He that saith he abideth in Him"—by virtue of that abiding—"ought himself so to walk even as He walked." "The meek shall He guide in judgment." Then the third word that is used here is a general expression for all sorts of teaching, and may imply the continuity and the repetition, lesson by lesson, here a little and there a little, the gradual unfolding which is a characteristic of a wise teacher's dealing with his pupils; giving each little brain as much as it can carry to-day, and not minding about to-morrow's lesson till to-morrow comes.

So we have the promise not only of direction at the initial point, which may show us the general trend of our road, nor only the more blessed thought of a Companion and a Guide who leaves us an example that we should follow in His steps; but we have also the thought of a gradual, progressive unfolding of duty and of righteousness. And just as a child learns the alphabet first, and then longer-syllabled words, and then is let out into great fields of knowledge, so a Christian man's conscience ought

to be ever growing, not only in the clearness of its perceptions, and in the firmness of its decisions, but in the sensitiveness that it has to the touch of good or of evil. Thus directed, thus guided, thus progressively taught, we should pass on from the lowest benches of the day-school up to the university. Our Teacher, because He is "good and upright," will direct and guide and instruct us, if only we are docile scholars in His school. Have we experience of the progressive character of the Divine teaching? Do we see duty more clearly than we did ten years ago? Have our consciences been enlightened, so that things that seemed then to be perfectly legitimate, and were done without winking, we cannot do now? And have we become more swift and more cheerful in our obedience to the progressive teaching? These are sharp questions for us all, brethren. But the great promise of my text is not only a great promise, it is a solemn obligation. "Good and upright is the Lord"; therefore our schooling is not done until we have learnt the whole "truth as it is in Jesus."

Every one that is perfect shall be as his Master."

And so, lastly, notice—

III. THE CONDITIONS OF THIS TEACHING.

"The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way." The quality expressed in that word may be put in a double fashion. It

means humility and it means docility. The man that is sure of himself, self-confident, quite certain that he knows what is to be done, and who does not take God into his counsel, that man is not taught. And, on the other hand, the man that lives so near God that he can look into His face and see the commandment or the prohibition in His eye, and so is guided by His eye, that man is taught. There is nothing that so much comes in our way, in interpreting our providences, in imitating our Lord, in profiting by the progressive teaching of God's Spirit, as self-will and indocility. The oak that stands unmoved by the storm is one day blown down by the storm. The reed that bends to the lightest touch of the lips of the south wind is safe. There was an old commandment given long ago, when the Israelites were coming out of the wilderness, and were to cross the Jordan. Joshua said to them, "The ark is to go first, and do you not be in a hurry to go after it. Leave a clear space between you and it, that you may know which way to go, for you have not passed this way heretofore." Do not run too fast on the heels of God's providences ; do not be too quick to interpret them. Give Him time to get clear ahead, that you may be quite sure which way He is going, and if you are not quite sure, stand still where you are. When we do not know what we ought to do, that is a clear sign that we ought to do nothing.

One of the prophets, Jeremiah, frequently rebukes "men who go forwardly in the way of their own hearts." And that is the sure temper to prevent and block out all the teaching of the good and upright Lord. Self-will, and the determination to have his own way, blind a man to providences, to Christ's example, and deafen his ears to the illuminative whispers of the Divine Spirit who "guides us into all truth."

So let us hold fast by that great thought of God. Let us be sure that we shall receive the guidance that we need, if only we will comply with the conditions, and in meekness abnegating our own will, and laying down our plans, and our wisdom, and our strength, and our everything at God's feet, say "the Lord shall choose my inheritance for me"; "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." "The meek will He guide in judgment"—and guide them by the right way to the City of Habitation.

In Memoriam : Queen Victoria*

IN the solemn hush which has fallen upon the land, business, pleasure, party strife are stilled like rivers in frost. The incoming tide of a common sorrow has buried all distinctions of creed or class. We are gathered to-day as members of the Evangelical Free Churches, from no wish for ill-timed separation, but simply because it was impossible that any considerable portion of the public should unite in the official service, and in token of the unity of spirit joining the congregation in the Cathedral and the congregation here, we have delegated two of our number to represent us there.

Never since England was a kingdom has one of its sovereigns been borne to the grave with a nation for his mourners. The stately ceremonial, which is passing through the streets of the Metropolis at this hour, will be unique in history, not so much for the long train of kings, princes, envoys, nor for

* Free Trade Hall, Manchester, Feb. 2, 1901.

the double line of battleships on sea, and of soldiers on land, through which it travels, but because a multitude which no man can number, out of this and every nation, really, though invisibly, join its ranks. There has never been anything like it in the world's history.

It reminds one of another royal funeral of which we read, when "all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah, and Jeremiah lamented for Josiah, and the singing men and the singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations." The nation, the prophet as representative of the godly, the singing men and women as types of literature and of art, concurred in the lament. And the reason of it all is added, "for his goodness, according to that which was written in the law of the Lord." For let us not forget that the Queen's religion was the impulse of her life. Men of all sorts, statesmen, judges, journalists, preachers, have extolled, in these sad days, her many excellences, and her far-reaching influence, but we to-day think rather of the wife, the mother, the good because godly woman.

They who bear her sacred dust to its last resting-place will pass through a portal over which is carved, by her command, an inscription which tells the secret of her life for forty years. It may be Englished thus: "His sorrowing widow, Victoria the Queen, ordered all that is mortal of Prince Albert to be

placed in this tomb, *Anno Domini* 1862. Farewell, beloved. Here at last I shall rest with thee. With thee in Christ I shall rise again." Love and grief made her think of herself first as a widow ; then as a Queen. The widow's cap was more congenial to that head than the royal crown. Henceforward she was invested with the greater majesty of sorrow, and compassed with a certain remoteness which awed frivolity and rebuked licence, but which never slacked her diligence nor chilled her sympathies. Faithful to one dear memory, she recognised all her duties, and was swift to bear her portion of national and individual joys and sorrows. Her own sorrow took her by the hand, and led her into the presence of Hope the Comforter. Therefore the agony of the parting cry, "Farewell, beloved," passed into a calm assurance of rest at last ; and after that last, of a new first wherein the two loves, the love of the dead husband and of the living Lord, should coalesce, and "with thee in Christ I shall rise again." Let us be thankful for such a confession of faith and such a disclosure of the secret springs of such a life.

The life that flowed from these deep fountains was worthy of them. Her steadfast perseverance in duty, her swift sympathies, her simplicity of taste, her purity of life, have been upon all men's lips. Therefore she was a conqueror in the noblest realm,

and won her people's hearts. They loved her because she loved and gave herself to them. He that would knit others to himself must, sleeping or waking, have one end of the bond fastened round his own heart. And let us not forget that the secret of it all was her personal faith in the Lord of her salvation. Therefore she was faithful to her early vow, "I will be good"; and how she fulfilled it, this day's reverent sorrow of a nation attests. So though we grieve,

Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail,
 . . . nothing but well and fair,
 And what may quiet us, in a death so noble!

The fall of so great a cedar makes a gap, even in the forests of Lebanon. And to-day we are being taught that—

The glories of our birth and state
 Are shadows, not substantial things;
 There is no armour against fate,
 Death lays his icy hand on kings.

But we are Christians, and to us no darkness is unvisited by gleams of light. She "hath outsoared the shadow of our night," and though no man's glory descends into the grave after him, every man's character goes with him :

Their works, and alms, and all their good endeavour
 Stay not behind, nor in the grave are trod.

The faithful servant, be he prince or pauper, passes
 to nobler work, to higher authority, to wider service.

Be he prince or pauper, for the law of life is
 the same for all conditions. We, too, may be
 steadfast in our small duties. We, too, may educate
 our hearts to swift sympathy, and numberless, though
 often unremembered, acts of daily kindness. We, too,
 may be pure. We, too, may walk in the light of the
 great hope. We, too, may knit ourselves to, and
 base our lives upon, Jesus Christ.

As members of Evangelical Free Churches our
 loyalty and our love have been unstintedly given to
 the departed Queen. They are now given to the King.
 For many years he has filled a peculiarly difficult
 position, demanding much self-suppression, and en-
 forcing much unwelcome inaction. We earnestly pray
 for him, and trust that he may prolong the tradition
 of inherited goodness, and that King Edward, like
 Queen Victoria, may be in our land a power that
 makes for righteousness.

But we must lift our eyes beyond earthly
 sovereigns, and let the passing of "that which can be
 shaken" reveal to us the King and the "Kingdom
 that cannot be moved." The lesson of this day for
 us all is, "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the

son of man, in whom is no help. His breath goeth forth; he returneth to his earth. Happy is the man that hath the God of Jacob for his help!" Happy is the nation whose God is the Lord, whose King is the Christ—"the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever"!

Christ's Ideal of a Monarch

The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest amongst you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.—
LUKE xxii. 25-6.

THERE have been sovereigns of England whose death was a relief. There have been others who were mourned with a certain tepid and decorous regret. But there has never been one on whose bier have been heaped such fragrant wreaths of universal love and sorrow as have been laid upon hers whom we have not yet learnt to call by another name than that which has been musical for all these years—the Queen. Why has her people's love thus compassed her? Surely, chiefly because they felt and saw that Christ's ideal of rule, as stated in these words of our text, was her ideal, which she had gone far to realise! Here is the secret of her hold upon her people. Here is the reason why, from almost all the world, tributes have come, and as

Mr. Balfour has well said, "They that loved not England loved her."

It would be impossible for me now to speak, or for you to listen to, words remote from the thought that has been filling the nation's mind in these days. I can add nothing to the many eloquent and just appreciations to which we have listened from every side, but I can draw your attention to the underlying secret which moulded and shaped that life, and it becomes the pulpit to do so. We Christians ought to infuse a Christian element into everything. We should "not sorrow as others," nor should we admire as others. We all unite in praising Queen Victoria, but eulogiums which ignore the ground of the virtues which they extol are superficial and misleading. I ask you to turn to the revelation of the secret of the nation's love and sorrow suggested by the words of my text.

Christ sets forth in two sharply contrasted pictures the world's ideal of a king and His ideal. The upper room was a strange place, and the eve of Calvary was a still stranger time, for disciples to squabble about pre-eminence. The Master was absorbed in the thought of His cross, the servants were quarrelling about their places in His kingdom. Perhaps it was the foot-washing that brought about the unseemly strife that arose among them, each desiring to hand on the menial office to another.

Jesus Christ did it Himself; and to that, perhaps, refer the touching words which Luke gives as following the text: "I am among you as he that serveth," with the towel round His loins, and the basin in His hand.

THE WORLD'S IDEAL OF A KING.

Now, the one picture which He draws for us here—the world's ideal of a king—is the portrait, familiar enough to all who know anything about that ancient order of society, of tyrants and despots, in Assyria, Babylonia, Pharaohs, and all the little kings round about Judæa. The vile old Herod and his equally vile brood, were recent or living examples of what the Master said when He sketched "the kings of the Gentiles." They "lord it over them." Arrogant superiority, imperious masterfulness, irresponsible wills, caprices uncontrolled, an absolute oblivion of duties, no thought of responsibilities—these were the features of that ancient type of monarch: and, in spite of all constitutional hedges and limitations, there is abundant room for the repetition of them, even in so-called Christian countries.

And then, side by side with that, comes another characteristic: "They that exercise authority upon them are called 'benefactors.'" They demand titles which shall credit them with virtues that they never try to possess, and live in a region filled with the fumes, from a thousand venal censers, of a flattery

which intoxicates and makes giddy. A king in Egypt, very near our Lord's time, had borne the title "Benefactor," the very word that is employed here; even as many a most ungracious sovereign has been called "Your Most Gracious Majesty."

The position tempts to such a type. And although the world has outgrown it, yet, as I have said, there is ample room for the recurrence to the old and obsolete form, unless a mightier hindrance than human nature knows, come in to prevent it. An ancient prophet lamented over the shepherds of Israel "that do feed themselves," and indignantly asked, "should not the shepherds feed the sheep?" He meant precisely the same contrast which is drawn out at length in these two pictures that we have before us now.

THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPTION.

Turn to the other ideal: "Ye shall not be so." The Christian conception is in sharp contrast to, and the Christian realisation of the conception should be the absolute opposite of, that type to which I have already referred. "He that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger"; that suggests modesty and meekness of demeanour in bearing the loftiest office. "And he that is chief as he that doth serve"; that expresses an activity, not self-regarding and self-centred, but ever used for others. The simple words of Jesus Christ are the noblest

expression of, and, as I believe, have been the mightiest impulse in producing, the modern recognition which, thank God! is becoming more and more pronounced every day amongst us, that power means duty, that elevation means the obligation to stoop, that true authority expresses itself in service. We see that conviction growing in all classes in England. Those who are lifted high are learning to-day, as they never learned before, the responsibilities and obligations of their position. And those who are low are beginning to apply the principle as they never did before, and to test the worthiness of the lofty, highly endowed, wealthy, and noble, by their discharge of the obligations of their position. And although it anticipates what I have to say subsequently, I cannot but ask here, who shall say how far the Queen's example of authority becoming service has steadied the Empire, and made a peaceful transition from the old type of authority to the new a possibility? Although not directly stated in my text, there is implied in it another thought, namely, that whilst power obliges to service, service brings power. He that uses his influence, his authority, his capacities, his possessions not for himself, but for his brothers, will find that by the service he has garnered in a harvest of authority, and power of command which nothing else can ever give.

And now I may turn, without passing beyond the bounds of the pulpit on such an occasion as the present, to look at the great illustration of the Christian ideal which the royal life now closed has given. I venture to say that, without exaggeration, and without irreverence, our Queen might have taken for her own the declaration of our Lord Himself, "I am among you as one that serveth." She served her people by the diligent discharge of the duties that were laid upon her. During a strenuous reign of sixty-three years, she left no arrears, nothing neglected, nothing postponed, nothing undone. In sorrow as in joy, when life was young, and the love of husband and family joys were new, as when husband and children were taken away, and she was an old woman, lonelier because of her throne, she laboured as "ever in the great Taskmaster's eye." That was serving her nation by the will of God. She served her people by that swift, sincere sympathy which claimed a share alike in great national and in small private sorrows. Was there some shipwreck or some storm, that widowed humble fisherfolk in their villages? The Queen's sympathy was the first to reach them. Were the blinds drawn down in some colliery village because of an explosion? The Queen's message was quickly there to bring a gleam of light into darkened homes. Did some great name in literature or science

pass away? Who but she was first to recognise the loss, to speak gracious words of appreciation? Did some poor shepherd die, in the strath where she made her Highland home? The widowed Queen was beside the widowed peasant, to share and to solace. Knowing sorrow herself only too well, she had learnt to run to the help of the wretched. Dowered doubly with a woman's gift of sympathy, she had not let the altitude of a throne freeze its flow.

She served her people yet more by letting them feel that she took them into her confidence, spreading before them in the days of her widowhood the cherished records that her happy pen had written in the vanished days of her wifehood, opening her heart to us in mute petition that we might give our hearts to her. She served her people by the simplicity of her tastes and habits, in these days of senseless luxury, and fierce, sensuous excitement of living. She served her people by the purity of her life, and so far as she could by putting a barrier around her court, across which nothing that was foul could pass. "He that worketh iniquity shall not tarry in my house," said an ancient king on taking his throne. And our Queen, to the utmost of her power, said the same; and frowned down—stern for once in a righteous cause—impurity in high places. Una had her lion, and this protest of a woman's delicacy against the vices of modern society

is not the least of the services for which we have to thank her.

Let me remind you that all this patient self-surrender had its root in Christian faith. She had taken her Lord for her example, because her faith had knit her to Him as her Saviour.

Therefore she, as no other English sovereign, conquered the heart of the nation, and was best loved by the best men and women. Never was there a more striking confirmation of the truth that whoever in any region reigns to serve will serve to reign.

And now, for a last word, let me remind you that the principles which I have been trying to express grip us, in our humble spheres, quite as tightly as they do those who may be mere largely endowed, or more loftily placed, than ourselves. There is no ideal for a Christian monarch which is not the ideal also for a Christian peasant. That which is the duty of the highest is no less the duty of the lowest. For us all it remains true that what we have we are bound to use not for ourselves, but as recognising both our stewardship to God and the solidarity of humanity ; to use for Him, that is to say, for men. This is the secret of all high, noble, blessed life for evermore.

And, brethren, whilst I for one heartily rejoice in the growing consciousness of responsibility which is being diffused through all ranks of society to-day, and, bless God for one impulse to that recognition

which, as I believe, came from the life now peacefully closed, I shall be no doubt charged by some of you with old-fashioned narrowness if I reiterate my own earnest conviction that we can rely on nothing to bring about a thoroughgoing, a widely diffused, and a permanent altruism—to use the modern word—except the force that comes from the motive which Jesus Christ Himself adduced, in this very conversation, when He said, “I am among you as He that serveth.” There is our example, ay! and more than our example, lodged in Him, and available for us, by our simple faith in Him. In love that seeks to copy, lies the only power that will cast out self, that “anarch old,” from His usurped seat in our hearts, and will throne Jesus Christ there. It needs a mighty lever to heave a planet from its orbit and to set it circling round another sun; and there is nothing that will deliver any man, in any rank of life, from the dominion of self, except submission to the dominion of Him who, because He died to serve, deserves and has won the supreme right of authority and dominion over human life.

To use anything for self is to miss its highest goodness, and to mar ourselves. To use anything for Christ and our brethren is to find its sweetest sweetness, and to bless ourselves to the very uttermost. Self-absorption is self-destruction; self-surrender is self-acquisition.

If we can truly say, "I am among you as he that serveth," if all our possessions suggest to us obligations and all our powers impose on us duties ; then be we prince or peasant, rich or poor, entrusted with many talents or with but one, we shall make the best of life here, and pass to higher authority, which is nobler service, hereafter. Be the servant of all, and all are yours ; serve Christ, and possess yourselves—these are the lessons from that royal life of service. May we learn them ! May the King walk in his mother's steps, and hearken to "the oracle which his mother taught him" !

Patience, Hope, Peace

The God of patience and consolation . . . the God of hope . . . the God of peace.—ROMANS xv. 5, 13, and 33.

THE close juxtaposition of these three epithets is remarkable, and I have ventured to rend them from their connection, and to put them together as my text, because I think that, gathering them into one, we may draw some very valuable lessons.

“Patience . . . hope . . . peace,” almost as fair a company as that other triad, “faith, hope, charity,” only that these have somewhat sadder faces, and have more to do with care and sorrow. We do not go far in life before we find out that we “have need of patience” ; for there are a great many things that cannot be cured, and that must be endured. We do not go very far before we find out that hope is least available when it is most needed, for it is generally but a reflection in the skies of the light of our joys ; and it fades when these die down. It is easiest to hope when things are going well with us, and then we want it least. And we do not

go far before we find out that, what with inward disharmony, and outward cares and trouble and changes, and the terrible dropping of all things precious from our hands, we can have but little peace.

So my three texts go straight to some of the deepest of our necessities, and show us that the only source of supply for them all is in God. The hold fast that keeps a man firm and upright must be without himself; and the fountain, the waters of which are to reach his lips, must have its source high above his head. "The God of patience and consolation . . . the God of hope . . . the God of peace"—there we get them all; elsewhere we get none of them. But if we put these three fragments together, we get instruction, too, about not only the source of our patience, and hope, and peace, but about the way by which these blessings can come to us from the one source. Now, in order to trace the real sequence in which these great gifts become ours, we begin with the last of these, and note that

I. GOD IS THE GOD OF PEACE.

Now, of course, that phrase might intend to describe not so much a gift of which He is the source, as an attribute of which He is the possessor. And very beautiful it would be, even in that sense, bringing to our minds the calm, eternal tranquillity of the unmoved and unchanging Source of all that moves and changes. But the analogy of the other two

epithets seems distinctly to determine that what the apostle was thinking about in this name, "the God of peace," was not so much a characteristic of the Divine nature as a gift of the Divine hand to us. Now, in order to come to an understanding of the depth and the fulness of this great phrase, I must ask you to remember the context of one of these three fragments. We read in the thirteenth verse, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing." That is to say, whilst God is the source of all true joy in its manifold forms, and of all true peace in its infinite depth, the condition on which to us individually He becomes the God of peace, the source of our tranquillity, is "in believing." Or, to put it into other words, the peace of God, which comes into all our hearts from the God of peace, comes on condition of our faith and trust. There is a precisely similar filiation of ideas, in another part of this great epistle, where the apostle says, "being justified by faith, let us have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," where again the link of connection between "the God of peace" and my heart is my faith. So, then, we come to this, that the initial step by which all this triad of blessings can be poured into our hearts is that, trusting in Him, in His Son Jesus Christ, who manifests and brings God to us, we thereby have the calm tranquillity of heart, which is the first of the

three linked sisters to make her abode with us. Brethren, the one road to true, solid, permanent peace is the ancient path of faith, that sweeps away the enmity between the rebellious and self-willed heart and God. The beginning of all true rest of heart is that a man's relations with God should be, consciously to the man himself, and thoroughly, and to the very foundation, set right. Any kind of apparent tranquillity which does not base itself upon childlike amity with God is like the skinning-over of a wound—beneath the surface there lies corruption, and the sore will one day or other break out with tenfold violence and stench. If there is to be peace, there must first of all be peace with God; and if there is to be peace with God—oh, believe it,—there must be faith in Jesus Christ. Anything else is skinning over the wound, and all its virulence is left untouched.

But, again, the act of faith brings into the full possession of peace, because the very act of trusting, even when the trust is set upon one of our poor selves, breathes calm over a man's heart. The child goes to sleep in the storm: "my father is at the helm." The old saying has it that the traveller with an empty purse may sing in the presence of the robber. Yes; and the traveller with the fullest of purses may rest quite quiet if he has a strong guard round him; if he is trusting his escort, he himself will be at rest. Trust is tranquillity, even when it is

fixed on a finite and unworthy object. And if we can lift our trailing confidences that so often twine round rotten stays here, and wreath them about the pillars of God's throne, we shall stand as stable as it, and "the peace of God that passes understanding" will keep our hearts and minds.

Again, trust brings peace, because in faith there is an absolute surrender of one's own will to God. When Jesus Christ, close to Gethsemane and Calvary, said, "My peace I give unto you," what were the elements of that peace that He bequeathed? Mainly this one, absolute submission to the will of God. That is the secret of all peace. When my heart bows either to obey His commandments, however distasteful to sense, or to accept His appointments, however painful to the flesh they may be, some low beginnings of content come to tranquillise the heart. What disturbs us in our daily lives is mainly our wills that kick against the pricks, and are recalcitrant to the providences of God, like some half-tamed domestic animal that plunges, and will not be dragged where the owner would have it, but for all its panting and its growls, has to go. Far better if it went quietly like a dog at its master's heels. The secret of peace is submission.

And, again, trust brings peace, because it opens the door for, and admits us into, communion with God, the one object the possession of which fills, with

a happy emancipation from the necessity of further search, all the powers of our nature. They who are rich need cast themselves into no doubtful speculations, nor torture themselves in the effort to gain more. And he who has God has thereby a heart quieted because it possesses all, a will subdued by love, and a nature satisfied, and therefore content to count its treasures, and not needing to seek by weary restlessness and many journeys here and there and everywhere, for goodly pearls. The one of great price makes rich to all intents of bliss, and is ours on condition of our simple trust.

And, still further, which is but a branch of the same thought, that possession of God which comes to all that trust Him, harmonises a man's whole nature with itself, and so brings peace within. There is no more contradiction, no pulling of inclination this way and conscience that way, but in the measure in which our faith is vivid, strong, continuous, and, therefore, has brought into ourselves God Himself, in that measure does the ancient strife within cease to rage. If, by faith all the currents of our being set in one direction, the little eddies and backwaters, and the swirl of small whirlpools in the stream, are obliterated and abolished by the suck of the great orb that draws the heaped waters after itself. The man whose being sets towards God is at peace, and only he.

Such, then, is the account, as it seems to me, of that one of these three epithets which I regard as the foundation of all, and so we come to the next one. God being the "God of peace" is thereby,

II. THE GOD OF PATIENCE AND CONSOLATION.

Now, I have often had occasion to remark upon these two words which are here employed, and to point out that the one rendered "patience" does not mean merely the passive virtue of endurance, but involves likewise the notion of active persistence and perseverance in a given course, irrespective of the obstacles, the sorrows and difficulties, which may threaten to hinder our advance. Brave perseverance, much rather than quiet endurance, is the meaning of the word. The consolation of which the apostle is speaking is rather encouragement than merely consolation.

Now it is to be noticed that these two things, "patience" and "consolation," which are regarded in our text as the gift of God, are in the immediately previous verse traced to the Scripture. For we read, just before the words with which I am now concerned, "that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope." No doubt psalm and prophet have often brought patience, and consolation, and encouragement to fighters and sufferers; but it is, I think, beautiful to notice that the apostle at once turns away from the medium or source in

the Scriptures to point to Him who is the true Source and Origin. It is not the Bible that gives you patience and comfort, but it is the God of the Bible, "the God of patience and consolation." And is it not true, that the peace of which I have been speaking will surely issue in our hearts in that brave persistence and long-suffering endurance which are implied in this word "patience," and in the possession within of an encouragement which does more than comfort us for our sorrows, viz., braces us up not only to bear them, but through them to attain more manly and heroic conduct, and more firm and consolidated character? The "peace," of which we have been speaking, makes all outward trials dwindle and dwarf themselves. What matters it, though all the world outside the Arctic explorers' little house be white with eternal death and snow, if within there are warmth, and light, and food? He can stand the polar winter, and wait for the faint twilight which shall declare that its reign is passed. And so the man that is living with the peace of God in his heart, can endure what else would be intolerable, and can breast what would otherwise be an overwhelming inundation, and say, "Here I stand, and though the rain falls and the floods come, my foot is on the rock, and I shall not be moved." The peace of God brings patience.

That same peace not only minimises, but explains

the troubles, the oppositions, the petty annoyances, the great calamities, the irreparable losses, and all the ills that flesh is heir to, and teaches us, "He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness." Will it not be easier to be patient when we are certain that what is working upon us is sure, unless we thwart it, to make us better men and women? We are like the great bells in some cathedral tower, which can only give forth music when they are smitten by strong hammers. We should be patient with the blows which beat out the music that else would slumber in our souls. "The God of peace" is the "God of patience and consolation."

Lastly, being the God of peace and patience.

III. HE IS THE GOD OF HOPE.

If you will observe the context of one of these fragments, you will find that there is given there a genealogy, so to speak, of hope. "The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope." So, then, faith is the parent of joy and peace; joy and peace are the parents of hope. That is one line of descent; but there is another. If you turn to the other of our fragments, you will find another genealogy given, for the context runs thus: "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have

hope." Then, patient persistence, and the consolation or encouragement which come from the Scriptures and from the God of the Scriptures, again produce hope. There are, thus, two lines of descent, as it were—two series of experiences, both of which issue in the one result, the hope of the Christian life. And the same double source is worked out at length in the passage to which I have already referred in the fifth chapter of this epistle, where we have, on the one hand, justification by faith and access to God, issuing in "hope of the glory"; and on the other hand, tribulation working patience, and patience experience, and experience again hope. Thus you have the same twofold origin; the bright and the dark, the triumphs and the troubles alike, issuing in the one result.

I have not time to dwell upon this thought adequately, but just let me say a word or two about it. According, then, to this double view of the genesis of hope, it comes from joy and peace in believing, and it comes likewise from the patience and encouragement which God gives us.

On the one hand true Christian hope is the child of present joy and peace, which are the consequences of faith. For all hope's most radiant pictures are painted with pigments supplied by the experience of earth, and her garments are woven, warp and woof, with the yarn that has been spun on the

spindles here below. Experience supplies hope with all her materials ; and the condition of joy and peace into which we may come, and shall come in the measure in which we are living lives of faith in the Son of God, is the best brightener of, as it is the surest evidence for, the hope of immortality and communion with God beyond the grave. Our faith in a perfection of future communion with God is but shallow and imperfect, a mere conception of the understanding, with little power to bless or to succour, unless it is built on no philosophical demonstration, nor even upon the words of Scripture, nor even upon the outward fact of Christ's Resurrection, but upon the inward experience of the properly infinite and eternal nature of the joys which come by communion with the living God. When a man can say, "Thou art the strength of my heart," then he can say with a faith which is irrefragable, because it is the voice of his own experience, "Thou art my Portion for ever." Thus peace issues in hope.

And, on the other hand, the genealogy of hope is traced up to the patience which one of my texts speaks about. He that is able to endure—not with the godless stoicism of a man that sets his teeth and says, "Pour on! I will endure," but with the loving submission of a child that sees his father's hand in all—has in the endurance a demonstration

far beyond all logic, because it is a bit of himself, of God's power to sustain, and of the genuineness of his own faith, which makes him certain that He that has been with him in six troubles will not leave him in the seventh; and that He who has led him through life will carry him clean over the narrow gorge of death, and will ever guide his advancing march upon the blessed tablelands "whereof our God Himself is sun and moon." Thus, peace begets hope, and patience begets hope.

Christ is our peace, and Christ is our hope. If you take Him for your Saviour, and through Him receive peace with God, then you will have patience to endure, and courage to fight the good fight, and, being victorious over temptations, and kept calm in the midst of strife with the peace that is "all-skilful in the wars," you will be able to see the King in His beauty, and the land that is very far off, and to feed your hope of reaching its shores alike by trials and triumphs, by sorrows and joys, by the tribulations that are in the world, and by the peace that is in Christ Jesus. "By Him let us have peace with God," and He will give us patience that is never worn out, and a hope that is not ashamed.

True Zeal

Zealous of good works.—TITUS ii. 14.

THIS is one of Paul's latest letters, the work of an old man. It is characterised, in contrast with his earlier epistles, by the remarkable stress which, like its sister letters to Timothy, it lays upon conduct. That difference between it and the earlier writings of the apostle has often been alleged as a reason for doubting its genuineness. But is there anything more natural than that, as he drew near the end of his life, and after he had laid the foundation, broad and deep and level, of the principles of the Christian revelation, Paul should thereon rear that, for the sake of which the foundation was laid, viz., these exhortations to good works? Surely doctrine exists for the sake of practice, and surely Christ Himself, as this very verse tells us, in the miracle of His humiliation, and in the transcendent self-forgetfulness of His sacrifice on His cross, had no higher end than, as the context says, to purify

to Himself a people for His possession, "zealous of good works."

If these letters are characterised by especial emphasis being laid on Christian conduct, they are no less characterised by the closer union which they ever contemplate between the conduct which is consequence, and the faith in Jesus Christ which is its cause.

I. Notice, first, how there is laid down here the best DIRECTION FOR CHRISTIAN ZEAL TO TAKE.

Now it is very unfortunate that the ordinary, superficial vocabulary of Christian people has laid hold of that phrase "good works," and narrowed it down to mean one specific department of these. The expression is apt to suggest to us a vision of soup kitchens, dispensaries, charitable institutions, mission-halls, etc., etc. We forget that the apostle means something a great deal more comprehensive than works of beneficence, however great and important these may be, that he means, in fact, the whole activity of a spirit knit to Jesus Christ, and manifesting itself therefore necessarily in all things that are lovely and of good report, and moulded after the pattern of the perfect life of Him from whom it draws its life.

Do not let us forget either that when we say "good works," we only partially represent the depth of the apostle's meaning here, for he employs, as

many of you know, that profound and lovely Greek phraseology by which, instead of describing the acts as "good"—an adjective which only defines their moral quality—he qualifies them as "beautiful," an adjective which implies the appeal which they make to every man's sense of harmony, of loveliness, of symmetry, of proportionateness.

All "good" works are beautiful. Alas! that the earthliness and sensuality of men have degraded and besmirched art so that we cannot say that all beautiful work is good. Let us take this lesson: that nothing comes up to the Christian standard, however conformed it may be morally to the great law of rectitude, unless it is conformed also to the no less imperative law of beauty; and that we are just as much bound to seek to make our lives fair, as we are bound to make them pure. Be zealous of good works, and see that you give the word its widest intrepertation, and not fancy that it is confined to crusades of any kind. And see, too, that you give it the interpretation which includes whatsoever things are lovely and whatsoever things are of good report. There we fail, and there especially do many recognised types of Christian character most signally break down.

But let me ask you to notice how, in the words of my text, there is provided for us the true aim, the highest of all aims, to which zeal should be directed.

I do not need to spend your time in defining zeal. We all know what it is, perhaps we know best, as the old philosopher said about God, what it is when we do not try to define it. But just let me point out that it is all very well for us to be earnest and eager apostles and missionaries of great causes of different kinds, more or less immediately connected with Christian truth, by which we may seek to influence other people's opinions and practice, but that there is a better field for our zeal, and that is, the continuous effort to make ourselves what God would have us to be, and what Christ has set us the example of being.

To make ourselves Christ-like is our first duty. People often find it very difficult to reconcile the conflicting claims of self-improvement, and public calls of various kinds, or religious activity. But let us distinctly understand that, however needful it is for us all—and it is needful if we are to be true Christians—to take a vigorous part in the great struggle that God's will has in the world to get itself recognised and done, the first thing that we have all to be zealous about is to see that we ourselves recognise and do it.

Depend upon it, the most of us will do far more for the world by mending ourselves than by trying to mend other people. I do not wish to say a word to check the flow of earnest beneficence either in a Christian or in a more distinctly secular direction, but

I do plead for the increase of earnest regard to our own spiritual character and conduct proportionate to the increase of mere external activities.

There were in our Lord's time a set of men who claimed for their own, or had given to them by public opinion, the name that the apostle here employs, "Zealots." In the expiring days of the Jewish commonwealth, when foreign influences poured in like a flood and threatened to wash away temple and customs, these men declared passionately against innovation, and were zealous for the law, as Paul tells us that He was, and their zeal led them into many crimes. They had zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. There was one of them who became a Christian, and an apostle, and his name stands on the list of the twelve, Simon Zelotes. He had brought his fiery zeal to Jesus to purify and direct it, and had found the true field for it in the service of his Master. In all zeal which devotes itself mainly to influencing the opinions and practices of other people, there is perilously apt to mingle baser elements. That gold has always a good deal of alloy in it. The old narrative of Jehu, the savage butcher that became King of Israel, and murdered people by the hundred, and then complacently said, "Come and see my zeal for the Lord," does not want its parallels to-day in the fierce intolerance and personal motives which are so apt to blend with such enthusiasm.

I do not wish to withdraw any zeal from other regions, but I do urge that the deepest current should run strong and full in the direction of my text, and that if we are to be, as we ought to be, zealots, we shall be "zealots for good works."

II. Now, notice again how my text brings out the TEMPER OF ENTHUSIASM, which is the only one by which any lofty morality will ever be achieved.

A man that does good works because he cannot help it, or because he is driven by the constraint of a conscience that he does not care to obey, we might almost say, does not do good works at all. At any rate there is a woeful deduction to be made from all such "goodness." I know that we have often to coerce ourselves into paths of righteousness, and out of paths of evil. But that is second best. The first and the highest form of Christian living is that with eagerness we desire, and with joy we set ourselves to achieve, and with earnestness we follow after, all things that are fair and noble. Reluctant obedience is scarcely distinguishable from disobedience. And if we think of all that goes to make up the notion of zeal, the fiery eagerness, the enthusiastic delight, the joy in every opportunity of doing the thing; and then think of our tempers when we set ourselves to what we know is God's will concerning us, then I think we may all hide our faces, and say, "Unclean! unclean!" A joyful

heart makes little service great. A heart that has pleasure in the doing of the deed makes the heaviest service light. We are to be zealous, and unless we have this animating enthusiasm, and find delight in the performance of God's will, we shall fall far, far short not only of the obligations, but of the possibilities, of the Christian life. "Then, said I, lo! I come, I delight to do Thy will; Thy law is within my heart." We are to be "Zealots for good works," and not driven to do them by a sense of duty, by dread of retribution, nor lured by the prospect of reward, but doing them just because we love them, and love to have the opportunity of so serving.

III. Now, one more word before I close. My text, in its connection, leads us to see very clearly, further, THE ONE SECRET OF THIS ZEAL.

"He gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a people for His possession." It is only when hearts are thus purified, when they have given themselves away in response to, and recognition of Christ's gift of Himself to us, that such a temper of zeal will be realised. His gift of Himself breaks the dominion of self in us, in the measure in which we receive it; and takes away the hindrances which keep us from being passionately enthusiastic after goodness. His gift of Himself melts the iron, and makes it run a glowing

stream, into any mould which the founder may lay at the opening of the furnace. His gift of Himself is the secret of our being "zealous of good works." Here is the great central station from which the electric light and heat are communicated to the city. Switch on to it, complete your connections, and keep yourselves where the power will come thrilling, warming, enlightening. It is when we clasp the hand of Him of whom His disciples remembered that it was said, "The zeal of Thy house hath eaten me up"; that we, in our turn, being purified unto Him, and made His possession by our own surrender, will become "zealous of all good works."

Go into Peace

And He said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee ; go in peace.—LUKE vii. 50.

WE find that our Lord twice, and twice only, employs this form of sending away those who had received benefits from His hand. On both occasions the words were addressed to women : once to this woman, who was a sinner, and who was gibbeted by the contempt of the Pharisee in whose house the Lord was ; and once to that poor sufferer who stretched out a wasted hand to lay upon the hem of His garment, in the hope of getting healing—filching it away unknown to the Giver. In both cases there is great tenderness ; in the latter case even more so than in the present, for there He addressed the tremulous invalid as “daughter” ; and in both cases there is a very remarkable connection hinted at between faith and peace ; “Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace.”

I. Now, there are three things that strike me about these words ; the first of them is this—

I. THE DISMISSAL OF THE WOMAN.

One might have expected that our Lord would have flung the shield of His companionship, for a little while, at any rate, over this penitent, and so have saved her from the scoffs and sneers of her neighbours, who knew that she was a sinner. One might have supposed that the depth of her gratitude, as expressed by her costly offering and by her tears, would have spoken to His heart, and that He would have let her stop beside Him for a little while ; but no ! Jesus said to her, in effect : “ You have got what you wished ; go away, and take care of it.” Such a dismissal is in accordance with the way in which He usually acted. For very seldom indeed do we find that He summoned any individual to His side, after He had gathered the first nucleus of four disciples. Generally He broke the connection between Himself and the recipients of His benefits at as early a moment as possible, and dismissed them. And that was not only because He did not wish to be surrounded and hampered by a crowd of slightly attached disciples, but for two other reasons ; one, the good of the people themselves, and the other, that, scattered all over northern Palestine, they might in their several circles, become centres of light and evangelists for the King. He dispersed them that He might fling the seed broadcast over the land.

Jesus Christ says to us, if we have been saved by

our faith, "Go!" And He intends two things thereby. First, to teach us that it is good for us to stand by ourselves, to feel responsibility for the ordering of our lives, not to have a visible Presence at our sides to fall back upon, but to grow by solitude. There is no better way of growing reliant, of becoming independent of circumstances, and in the depths of our own hearts being calm, than by being deprived of visible stay and support, and thus drawing closer and closer to our unseen Companion, and leaning harder and heavier upon Him. "It is expedient for you that I go away." For solitude and self-reliance, which is bottomed upon self-distrust and reliance upon Him, are the things that make men and women strong. So, if ever He carries us into the desert; if ever He leaves us forsaken and alone, as we think; if ever He seems—and sometimes He does with some people, and it is only seeming—to withdraw Himself from us, it is all for the one purpose, that we may grow to be mature men and women, not always children, depending upon go-carts of any kind, and nurses' hands and leading-strings. Go, and alone with Christ realise by faith that you are not alone. Christian men and women, have you learnt that lesson—to be able to do without anybody and anything because your whole hearts are filled, and your courage is braced up and strengthened, by the thought that the absent Christ is the present Christ?

There is another reason, as I take it, for which this separation of the new disciple from Jesus was so apparently mercilessly and perpetually enforced. At the very moment when one would have thought it would have done this woman good to be with the Lord for a little while longer, she is sent out into the harshly judging world. Yes, that is always the way by which Christian men and women that have received the blessing of salvation through faith can retain it, and serve Him—by going out among men and doing their work there. The woman went home. I dare say it was a home, if what they said about her was true, that sorely needed the leavening which she now would bring. She had been a centre of evil. She was to go away back to the very place where she had been such, and to be a centre of good. She was to contradict her past by her present which would explain itself when she said she had been with Jesus. For the very same reason for which to one man that besought to be with Him, He said, “No, no ; go away home and tell your friends what great things God has done for you”—He said to this woman, and He says to you and me, “Go, and witness for Me.” Communion with Him is blessed, and it is meant to issue in service for Him. “Let us make here three tabernacles,” said the apostle ; and there was scarcely need for the parenthetical comment, “not knowing what he said.” But there

was a demoniac boy down there with the rest of the disciples, and they had been trying in vain to free him from the incubus that possessed him. And as long as that melancholy case was appealing to the sympathy and help of the transfigured Christ, it was no time to stop on the Monnt. Although Moses and Elias were there, and the voice from God was there, and the Shekinah cloud was there, all was to be left, to go down and do the work of helping a poor, struggling child. So Jesus Christ says to us, "Go, and remember that work is the end of emotion, and that to do the Master's will in the world is the surest way to realise His presence."

II. Now, the second point I would suggest is—

THE REGION INTO WHICH CHRIST ADMITTED THIS WOMAN.

It is remarkable that in the present case, and in that other to which I have already referred, the phraseology employed is not the ordinary one of that familiar Old Testament leave-taking salutation, which was the "good-bye" of the Hebrews, "Go in peace." But we read occasionally in the Old Testament a slight but eloquent variation. It is not "Go in peace," as our Authorised Version has it, but "Go into peace," and that is a great deal more than the other. "Go in peace" refers to the momentary emotion; "Go into peace" seems, as it were, to open the door of a great palace, to let down

the barrier on the borders of a land, and to send the person away upon a journey through all the extent of that blessed country. Jesus Christ takes up this as He does a great many very ordinary conventional forms, and puts a meaning into it. Eli had said to Hannah, "Go into peace." Nathan had said to David, "Go into peace." But Eli and Nathan could only wish that it might be so; their wish had no power to realise itself. Christ takes the water of the conventional salutation and turns it into the wine of a real gift. When He says, "Go into peace," He puts the person into the peace which He wishes them, and His word is like a living creature, and fulfils itself.

So He says to each of us: "If you have been saved by faith, I open the door of this great palace. I admit you across the boundaries of this great country. I give you all possible forms of peace for yours." Peace with God—that is the foundation of all—then peace with ourselves, so that our inmost nature need no longer be torn in pieces by contending emotions, "I dare not" waiting upon "I would," and "I ought" and "I will" being in continual and internecine conflict; but heart and will, and calmed conscience, and satisfied desires, and pure affections, and lofty emotions being all drawn together into one great wave by the attraction of His love, as the moon draws the heaped waters

of the ocean round the world. So our souls at rest in God may be at peace within themselves, and that is the only way by which the discords of the heart can be tuned to one key, into harmony and concord; and the only way by which wars and tumults within the soul turn into tranquil energy, and into peace which is not stagnation, but rather a mightier force than was ever developed when the soul was cleft by discordant desires.

In like manner, the man that is at peace with God, and consequently with himself, is in relations of harmony with all things and with all events. "All things are yours if ye are Christ's." "The stars in their courses fought against Sisera," because Sisera was fighting against God; and all creatures, and all events, are at enmity with the man who is in antagonism and enmity to Him who is Lord of them all. But if we have peace with God, and peace with ourselves, then, as Job says, "Thou shalt make a league with the beasts of the field, and the stones of the field shall be at peace with thee." "Thy faith hath saved thee; go into peace."

Remember that this commandment, which is likewise a promise and a bestowal, bids us progress in the peace into which Christ admits us. We should be growingly unperturbed and calm, and "there is no joy but calm," when all is said and done. We should be more and more tranquil and at rest; and

every day there should come, as it were, a deeper and more substantial layer of tranquillity enveloping our hearts, a thicker armour against perturbation and calamity and tumult.

III. And now there is one last point here that I would suggest, namely :

THE CONDITION ON WHICH WE SHALL ABIDE IN THE LAND OF PEACE.

Our Lord said to both these women : "Thy faith hath saved thee." To the other one it was even more needful to say it than to this poor penitent prostitute, because that other one had the notion that, somehow or other, she could *steal* away the blessing of healing by contact of her finger with the robe of Jesus. Therefore He was careful to lift her above that sensuous error, and to show her what it was in her that had drawn healing "virtue" from Him. In substance He says to her : "Thy faith, not thy forefinger, has joined thee to Me ; My love, not My garment, has healed thee."

There have been, and still are, many copyists of the woman's mistake, who have ascribed too much healing and saving power to externals, sacraments, rites, and ceremonies. If their faith is real and their longing earnest, they get their blessing, but they need to be educated to understand more clearly what is the human condition of receiving Christ's saving power, and that robe and finger have little to do with it.

The sequence of these two sayings, the one pointing out the channel of all spiritual blessing, the other, the bestowment of the great blessing of perfect peace, suggests that the peace is conditional on the faith, and opens up to us this solemn truth, that if we would enjoy continuous peace, we must exercise continuous faith. The two things will cover precisely the same ground, and where the one stops the other will stop. Yesterday's faith does not secure to-day's peace. As long as I hold up the shield of faith, it will quench all the fiery darts of the wicked, but if I were holding it up yesterday, and have dropped it to-day, then there is nothing between me and them, and I shall be wounded and burned before long. No past religious experience avails for present needs. If you would have "your peace" to be "as the waves of the sea," your trust in Christ must be continuous and strong. The moment you cease trusting, that moment you cease being peaceful. Keep behind the breakwater, and you will ride smoothly, whatever the storm. Venture out beyond it, and you will be exposed to the dash of the waves, and the howling of the tempest. Your own past tells you where the means of blessing are. It was your faith that saved you, and it is as you go on believing that you "Go into peace."

Hiding and Not Hiding.

Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee.—PSALM cxix. 11.

I have not hid Thy righteousness within my heart.—PSALM xl. 10.

YOU will have anticipated my purpose in bringing these two texts side by side. They seem to contradict each other; they complete each other. They are like two hemispheres, each imperfect; each requiring the other to make the perfect round. There is a “hiding,” without which a Christian life is scarcely possible, and cannot be vigorous. There is a “not hiding,” which is equally indispensable. The latter is the consequence of the former. Unless a man can say, “Thy word have I hid in my heart,” depend upon it, he will never say, “I have not hid Thy righteousness from the great congregation”; and, conversely, unless a man can declare that he has told his deepest convictions, his deepest convictions will be very shallow. So here we have two things: the “hiding” which keeps from sin, and the “*not* hiding” which increases possession.

The one verse says, "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee," and the other verse says, "I have not hid Thy righteousness within my heart. I have not concealed Thy lovingkindness and Thy truth; withhold not Thy lovingkindness and Thy truth from me."

So, then, let us look at these two points. Here we have brought out—

I. THE DEEP, INWARD SECRET OF ALL NOBLE, AND ESPECIALLY OF ALL DEEP, REAL, CHRISTIAN LIFE.

"Thy word have I hid in my heart." We shall never understand that great 119th Psalm if we give "Thy word" the narrow sense of being a mere synonym for the Bible. No doubt the Bible is, in one sense, the Word of God, but you have only to read the Psalm itself, with any kind of intelligence, to see that the conception of the psalmist was a great deal wider than either Old or New Testament, or both of them put together. He employs for this "word of God" a great number of synonyms, such as "law," "judgment," "statutes"; and in one place he says, "For ever, O Lord, Thy Word is settled *in the heavens*." That is not the Bible, surely! No; the conception of the "word" which the psalmist hides in his heart is the broadest possible—the expression, in any way, of God's will. And the text is really entirely equivalent to what another psalmist says, "I delight to do Thy will,

O Lord, and Thy law is within my heart." But yet, although we must carry with us to get the full meaning of this context the wider conception of the Word of God, do not let us forget, on the other hand, that in the written Word we have the clearest, fullest manifestation to us of what God's will is, and that that revelation of it in the Scripture is the least liable to be misread and misunderstood.

So let me say, to begin with, that to "hide Thy Word in my heart" means, first, familiarity with your Bibles. That is a weak point in modern Christianity. I sometimes think that people read anything rather than Scripture, and that when they do feel religiously disposed they fly to magazines, "goody-goody" books, what they call religious newspapers, and the like ; and that these take up the time that their grandfathers used to give to reading their Bible. And their Christianity was a more vigorous thing than the grandsons' in consequence. Do not let any notion that God speaks "at sundry times and in divers manners" not only in Scripture, but otherwise, in providences, and in the world, and in our own hearts, cause us to neglect, as this generation does neglect, the systematic, diligent, daily perusal of Holy Scripture. You cannot hide the Word of God in your heart if you neglect, as so many of us do, the most articulate utterance of that Word in that Book, which, whatever may be

the theories about the way it came into being, is the Word of the living God.

Then there is another way by which we hide the word in our hearts. And I wish to put that, if I can, as directly and plainly as the former. It is, to cultivate the habit of referring everything to God's will. Every Christian man ought to carry in himself, if I may so say, a kind of testing apparatus, which automatically acts in reference to all suggestions to activity of any kind. And such a habit—the habit of saying to myself at every turn, “Now what will God think about this?”—is too late to begin to try to cultivate when the temptation is sprung upon us. Many a ship's crew, with half a dozen boats hanging at the davits at each side of the deck, have been drowned, because boat drill had been neglected in quiet weather, and when the tempest came they could not unhook the tackle and lower the boats into the water. It is not time to begin to cultivate such a habit as that when you are face to face with some crisis that demands instant decision. And our worst temptations are generally sprung upon us, unexpectedly and suddenly. The explosion gives no warning. They come like a lion from a thicket, with a bound and a roar, and before we know where we are their paws are in the tendons of our necks. So we have to cultivate the habit of referring the little things which do not seem crises at all to the

will of God ; or else, when the crisis comes we shall not gather ourselves together to ask ourselves, "Is this pleasing in God's sight?" till after we have done it. But this hiding of God's declared will in our hearts includes, besides familiarity with Scripture, and the habit of taking counsel of God, whose voice will speak in our hearts if we have that habit, loving submission to what we know to be that Divine will. That is what the 40th Psalm, from which my second text is taken, dwells most upon. "Thy law is within my heart. I delight to do Thy will." It is possible to come to such a stage of Christian life as that nothing shall be so delightful to us as obedience, and nothing detestable or repulsive but disobedience. Is that a rash statement? I do not know whether the author of the 119th Psalm kept habitually up to the high-water mark that he was at when he wrote it. Probably not. But for all that he sets before us the ideal of the devout life. Familiarity with the most authentic utterance of the will of God, the habit of consulting it, and the loving submission to it, these are the elements of hiding His Word in our hearts.

And if we have them, then, says our first text, we shall not sin against God. Familiarity with Scripture, and the power of bringing to mind and to bear upon a temptation some of its great words, is a wonderful helper in our daily fight. Luther

threw an inkpot at the devil, which is allegory. But it takes more than an ink-bottle to drive him away. Education does a great deal; culture of various kinds does a great deal. But fling a text at him, and he does disappear. "It is written, thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve. And when the devil had ended all his temptations he departed from Him." And that will be our experience; the Word of the Lord, in the narrow sense of the expression, is a wonderful weapon against temptation; and the habit of referring everything to Him, when once it has become established in a man, will aid him in a similar fashion; and most of all, perhaps, the temper of counting the obedience to the Beloved's will the very sweetest thing in all the world will lift us above sins, because it will make the inducements to them shrivel up and disappear. If we hide God's declared Will in our hearts, it will be like the tree that Moses flung into the bitter waters of Marah, and all the streams—the issues of life which flow from those hearts—will be purified at the fountain head. Put the Will of God into your heart, and it will be like a bit of camphor wrapped in some fur garment; it will keep all the moths off. "Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee."

My second text speaks of—

II. A NOT HIDING, WHICH INCREASES POSSESSION.

“I have not hid Thy righteousness within my heart, withhold not Thy tender mercies from me.” That life of which I have been speaking, the deep, secret life of communion with the “word of God,” will be hidden, but it will not be hidden. No man can smother up and bury his deepest convictions. No man manages altogether to conceal the secret of his life. It is as “the ointment of his right hand, which bewrayeth itself.” If there be a bulb in the ground, and there be life in the bulb, the flower will force its way up through the earth when the spring days come. Thus every one of us, although unconsciously, declares the secret of our hidden lives by our conduct in the world.

But there is more than that. No Christian man that has in his heart the Word and will of God, but will know the impulse to impart it, and that in proportion as his own possession of Jesus Christ, who, as the embodiment of the will, is the Word of God, is deep and vital.

What did the Prophet Jeremiah say, in a moment of depression? “I will speak no more in Thy name.” And what came of that resolve? “Thy word shut up in my heart,” which is another thing than “hid,” was “like a fire in my bones,” and it ate its way out, “and I was weary with forebearing, and I could not stay.” Dear friends, if we have the word deep

in our hearts, our lips will be opened to declare "Thy righteousness and Thy salvation."

And that declaration, whether it be by a life manifestly subordinated and conformed to the will of God, or whether it be by words that reveal the secret of our lives, in so far as it can be revealed, will increase our possession of the Word which it declares. The reason why so many Christian people have so little religion is because they do not live out the religion which they have. The talent in the napkin is taken from the servant who buried it. The way to lose your convictions is not to be true to them. The way to lose your faith is to suppress it, not to live by it. If no air gets to the fire it goes out. The way to increase your convictions is to act upon them, and to speak them. The way to deepen your Christianity is to let it have its power in your life, and come to utterance in your words.

But there is such a thing as a "not hiding," which weakens, and does not strengthen one's convictions and one's possession. If a man neglects the secret discipline, he will not long keep up the public manifestation. If you have all your goods in the shop window, bankruptcy is within measurable distance. Many a man has talked away his religion; many a preacher has been so occupied in "not hiding" that he has forgotten the necessity of "hiding" first,

in order that he might have treasures to dispense. If the lake be shallow and cover a vast tract of land, it will very quickly evaporate.

So, dear friends, let us keep to the Divine order. Begin with “hiding,” and do not forget afterwards, but *only* afterwards, the “not hiding.”

The King with Ten Thousand

What king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?—
LUKE xiv. 31.

I AM very grateful to be allowed to add one more to the long series of annual sermons to the young which I have preached. It is fifty-four years since the first of them, and each year makes it more probable that this will be the last. How many of the hearers have passed into the Unseen! And the speaker will follow. “The fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever? But My word which I spake unto your fathers through the prophets, took it not hold of your fathers?”

The words which I have read for my text are part of the second of two short parables or long similes, by which Jesus enforces the plain lesson that it is no light thing to be a disciple. It ought to be the result of squarely facing facts, and of prolonged deliberation. He is not going to tempt recruits by highly coloured

pictures. They shall know what they are doing, and what they have to expect.

Now I am not going to use the words which I have read as my text, and the other emblem, which means the same thing, viz., the man building his tower, and sitting down first to count the cost, so much for the purpose of interpreting the parables, as for the purpose of gathering from the general drift of them some lessons which I think may be seasonable for us. I will not try to ascertain, for instance, who the king with the twenty thousand is. That is a detail. There has been a great deal of harm done by insisting upon finding out a spiritual or moral meaning for every scrap of the Parables, as if they were so many conundrums. And that false principle has been carried to a patent absurdity in interpreting this parable, with the result that some people say that the "king with twenty thousand" is the devil, and some people say that he is God. When you arrive at a contradiction like that, it is a hint that you are on the wrong road altogether. Let us take two or three plain lessons.

Here is a solemn thought of

I. WHAT EVERY NOBLE LIFE HAS TO BE—A BUILDING AND A FIGHT.

The man intending to build a tower, and the other man intending to declare war, are the symbols of the man meaning to live a noble life as the disciple of

Jesus Christ. I do not speak about discipleship at present ; that will come presently. But what I wish to lay upon the hearts of my young friends especially is just this, that you will never do anything in this world that you will not be ashamed of, or anything that will bring any blessed and good results to you, unless your deepest notion about life is this—first, a building ; second, a conflict.

First, a building. “ Building,” you say ; “ building what ? ” Building yourselves—building character. That is what makes life so solemn—that all of us, whether we know it or not, are doing that ; and this is what makes life tragical, that so many of us doing it, do not know what we are doing, and are building at haphazard, so that our lives, instead of being an ordered sequence, a considered structure, a rightly evolved whole, harmonious and steadfast, are much more like a cartload of bricks emptied down on a place where a house is to be, which fall anyhow, and lie in disorder and impotence. The lives of half of us are not buildings, but, to use a well-known phrase, “ born ruins.” But if you mean to be anything worth being, if you are going to do anything worth doing, if you desire at all—and I should think there are no young men or women listening to me now that do not know something of the desire—to live as conscience would have you do, fix this in your mind, that there must be an architect’s plan

before there is a satisfactory house, and there must be a foundation before a steady topstone can be laid. The process of building must be continuous and slow, as it has been with some of these cathedrals, of which one generation laid the foundation, and a thousand years afterwards the topmost stone was set on the sky-piercing pinnacle.

What is it that you are building? A shop, a mill, a lecture-hall, a "stately pleasure-house," a dram-shop, a house of debauchery—which? You are building yourself; and what have you made of yourself, or what are you going to make of yourself all through life? My texts tell us what we ought to build—a tower, massive and strong. But a tower is not all. On the Acropolis, the citadel of Athens, stood the temple of the patron-goddess. The palladium was shrined in the Parthenon; and the Parthenon was on the citadel-rock. The tower is to be a temple; and unless it is, alas for the life!

Like the silkworms, you are building what you have to live in; and for some of us the building that we are rearing becomes a prison, out of which we cannot get. I read in a daily newspaper no longer ago than yesterday, of an American millionaire who died "universally respected," because he was a millionaire; and who said near the end of his life, "I do not want money; what I want is to be making it; what else can I do?" Ah! that man

was sent into the world with all but infinite possibilities, and after seventy years of "successful" work he had dwindled down to this—a machine for making money without the capacity of enjoying it, and having to say: "There is nothing else in God's universe that I am fit for." Now that man built a factory, and it turned out to be his prison, and there are a great many of us that are doing the same. So much, then, for the first of the thoughts here.

Jesus does not find the architectural emblem sufficient to explain the conditions of a noble life, and so He takes the militant one as well. Which, being turned into abstract words, is just this: there is no noble life possible unless you fight for it.

In our dreams we do fine things very easily, because we are working, so to speak, in vacuo. But when the atmosphere is let in, it is not quite so easy to make head against it. Our imaginations suggest to us grand deeds that we may do, but, when we come down into the region of hard reality, we find resistance that we had not reckoned on. The engineer will make a great mistake if in calculating the speed of his engine he does not allow for friction. We have all to fight if we would build, like Nehemiah's men, who had a sword in one hand and a trowel in the other. Unless I can say, "I will not," I shall never, to any good purpose, and strongly, say, "I will."

There must be conflict with myself, for I carry my

own most formidable foe about with me, in my own heart, and conflict with the world in which, beautiful as it is, and to you who are just beginning life, "apparelled in celestial light, the glory and the freshness of a dream," there yet are a great many more temptations to evil than aids to good.

Now, dear friends, I know that you young people have, as the prerogative and wealth of youth, which makes up for much that it does not possess, that inestimable power of sanguine anticipation. I do not seek to weaken or darken that in the least degree. God knows you will need it all before you come to the end.

If Nature put not forth her power
About the opening of the flower,
Who is there that could live an hour

But I do desire that, along with your eager anticipations and sanguine thoughts, you should carry this plain truth with you—that building and fighting are essential to all nobleness. That is my first point.

Now, let us take a second lesson, that in these two parables we have

II. A CALL FOR DELIBERATE CHOICE.

In both of them the man, before he embraces the purpose which has come into his mind, and determines to act upon it, is represented as "sitting down" leisurely and quietly to think the thing through,

and only after that does he pass a hand across his brow, to smoothe the wrinkles, and say "I will." Now that is what I beg you to do. I know very well that the attitude of deliberate choice is not congenial to youth. Instincts and impulses are strong then; experience is limited then, and it is more natural for you to act from strong instincts and impulses than it is to withdraw into yourself, and cautiously and protractedly to consider your course. But for all that, I do desire to bring my dear young friends, to whom I am more especially speaking now, face to face with the necessity of their making deliberately their choice as to the path they will pursue. One of the sad things of life is that at the age when such a choice would have the widest field and the most powerful influence, we practise it least, and that we old people get to be cautious and deliberate, and think over things twice before we determine upon them once, after the main choices of our lives have been made and are irrevocable.

So we see all around us lives that just drift, and people formulate their own laziness into a principle, and say, "Oh! circumstances determine a man's actions and character." Do they? Yes; to a very large extent they do. But there are two ways of taking a circumstance. You may yield to it, or you may resist it. In both cases it will help to shape your characters, but its effect upon you will

be diametrically opposite, according as you set your teeth and resist, or collapse and let it impel you. The question is, "Are you going to be a hammer or an anvil?" as Goethe said long ago. A north wind is blowing; one captain elects to run before it, and another braces up his yards, and gets a firm grip on the wheel, and then the north wind carries him all but north. And so with circumstances—they do shape you, but you can shape them, and determine what shape they shall put upon you. For instance, I remember a family (not in Manchester) in which the father was a drunkard, and there were two sons, one of them turned drunkard in due course, and the other turned an enthusiastic teetotaler. It was the same circumstances that made one a drunkard and the other a total abstainer. Let us have no more foolish talk—the only effect of which is to weaken men's sense of control over themselves, and responsibility for exercising it—about the power of circumstances upon men. It is the deliberate choice that we make that determines our whole character. Here you young people stand, with opportunities of choice, that many a man of my age would give all that he possesses if he had over again. May God help you to choose aright! Do not let it be your poor excuse for a certain course of conduct, "I drifted into it without thinking. I did not realise what I was doing. It was 'the thing' in my set.

I should have been thought so odd if I had not." "So did *not* I," said Nehemiah long ago, "because of the fear of the Lord." "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." At any rate let your course of conduct be the result of your deliberate choice, and take this as an infallible truth, that no man or woman will make anything of life unless they let their wills determine their actions, and their reason and conscience decide their will. That is my second point.

My third is this ; here is

III. THE SUMMONS TO A RIGHT ESTIMATE OF OUR RESOURCES.

The man that is going to build a tower, if he is not a fool, sits down first and considers whether he has sufficient to finish it. I daresay we all have seen some gaunt ruin that never was completed, and which some noble family, in a foolish representative, had begun upon a scale that meant bankruptcy, and the common people, all round the neighbourhood, call it "So-and-so's folly." I dare say we can all understand how little chance "the king with ten thousand" had against the king with his twenty thousand. Perhaps Jesus Christ was speaking with a reference, that was understood at the moment, to some contemporaneous disturbance among the restless neighbouring tribes, where some little kinglet was ever perking himself up against the mighty Caesar and

his legions. If we set ourselves to fight by ourselves with our ten thousand men, or to build with our small resources of marble and stones and cash, then we shall be like the men in the two parables. Let me put two or three plain questions.

Do you think that you, by yourself, can realise your ideals? "Your young men shall see visions," said the prophet. And I believe that that power is, in a sense, granted to most young men—the power of creating grand and pure and lofty imaginations as to what they are going to make their lives. You look at us old people who have fumbled along, and got through somehow, and do not feel that we have much to be proud of, and you think, "Ah! how much better I could have done it if I had been in their place." Yes, and we were all like you once; and the most cynical amongst us, who has got to the point of smiling at his early fantastic imaginations as he thinks them, now that he has been hardened by half a century of commerce with the world, used to say as you do, and he tried to work out his ideals with his own ten fingers, and so he ended, and that is how you will end. Can you realise your ideals? No.

Can you meet the demands of conscience by yourselves? I have abjured the attempt to interpret the meaning of, or to attach any special meaning to, "the king with twenty thousand."

But one might say that there comes to every man some solemn thought of a great duty towering high above him, ever urging him, imperative, and none the less imperative because it is inaccessible. You cannot fulfil the law written on your own hearts if you try to do so by yourselves. And when the demands of conscience are not complied with, then the demands of conscience turn into consciousness of sin. Can you deal with that? Have you any anodyne that will send your consciences to sleep? Have you any gag that will stifle their voices? When that solemn thought arises in your hearts "I have done wrong!" have you anything that you can say to it? No! "the King with twenty thousand" cannot be faced with the sparse ranks of your ten thousand.

Can you resist the temptations that storm in upon you? I have said that the world is more full of inducements to evil, by reason of our own weakness, than it is of aids to good. I have said that we carry our own worst foes within us. And can you stand against these? Have you stood against them? You know you have not, and you cannot.

Can you meet the army of sorrows that will come against you? I trust you may have bright and happy lives, but there are griefs that may come, and there are griefs that must come; and your ten thousand will not be able to front them. It is but

a ragged umbrella that we can put up of our own furnishing, against the pelting of the pitiless storm. It is but a poor shelter that we can rear to break the force of the wind that storms against us all. Can you meet the twenty thousand sorrows with your ten thousand of stoicism or patient endurance? No.

Can you meet "the King of Terrors," as they call death? No. It may not come to you yet. I hope it will not. My notion of Christianity is not a thing that will help a man to die, but a thing to help a man to live. So I do not dwell on that; but if I had second sight I have no doubt that, like the seers who were supposed to have that gift, I could pick out in this congregation more than one or two who have their winding-sheets high upon their breasts. The doctrine of averages makes that certain. Can you face that with your ten thousand? No.

Can you meet your Judge? "Rejoice! O young man, in the days of thy youth, . . . but know that for all these things God will bring thee to judgment." For every act of mine, whatever its issues upon others, has an issue upon myself. Like one of the old-fashioned muskets, my deed may not hit the mark, but the gun is sure to kick and bruise my shoulder, and so the anticipations of a judgment to come rise from the judgment that is going on now. "Can thy heart endure and thy hands be strong in the day when I shall deal with thee?" No.

He sitteth down and considereth whether, with ten thousand, he is able to meet "him that cometh against him with twenty thousand, or else"—that leads me to my last word,

IV. THE PLAIN CONCLUSION.

These enemies are sure to come storming upon us, and it is certain that in our own strength we cannot master them. So the "or else" comes in, and Jesus Christ tells us what He means by it, when He goes on to say that to be His disciple a man must forsake all that he hath. I have been trying to say that you cannot, with your limited powers (and you have no recruiting field from which you can gather in any more), front the certainties of life, of death, of eternity. Therefore you should recognise that you cannot, and drop all notion that you can, and all reliance on yourself. That forsaking of self is the underside of faith. It includes both entire abjuring of reliance upon myself, and the absolute fixing of all my trust on Jesus Christ. That brings fresh reinforcements into the field. The Captain of our salvation Himself comes when faith calls Him. One poor, weak man or woman, with Jesus Christ at their back, is always in the majority. If you have Jesus Christ with you, then, if I may recur for a moment to what I have been saying, you will be able to fulfil your ideals, you will be able to meet the demands of law and duty, you

will be able to deal with the sense of sin ; you will be able to bear, and so to conquer, sorrows ; you will be able to stand fast against temptations ; you will be ready to meet the last enemy, who will become a friend, and be turned into the angel-porter that opens the gates of heaven, and you will be able to stand before the Judge, and say, "Thou didst die for me. I have trusted Thee. Let me not be put to confusion."

If we will build on Christ the foundation, then, whatever winds may blow against the house, whatever waters may rise and sap its walls, it will stand, for it is founded upon a rock. If we are building in our own strength on any other foundation, our lives, however admirable men may sometimes think them, will lack a solid basis, and lack the shining heavenward-pointing apex, and will tumble into hideous ruin. If we fling ourselves into life's fight alone, we shall be beaten. If we cry to Jesus Christ in the battle He will come, like the Divine Warrior that the legends of many nations tell of, who appeared on his white horse when the fight was going against his people, and plucked victory out of defeat. Trust yourselves to His blood to take away your sin, and to His life to give you strength that will teach your hands to war and your fingers to fight ; and you "will be more than conquerors through Him that loved you."

A Great Question and a Plain Answer*

Sirs, what must I do to be saved? . . . Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.—ACTS xvi. 30-31.

A PRESSING question that I pray you all to ask, and,—blessed be God!—a swift and unhesitating answer that we may all receive. The question is: “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” The answer, as most of us know—God grant that we may take it—is “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”

A gaoler in old days would not be likely to be a nervous person, or one easily frightened. What threw the one who asked the question into such a state of agitation, with his nerves all in a quiver, and he himself so deferential to the two men whom he had thrust into the inner prison an hour or two before? What? The earthquake that woke him, frightened him, because, as he felt the cool midnight

* Preached at the Simultaneous Mission, Free Trade Hall, February, 1901.

air coming into the stifling atmosphere, and saw that the doors were opened, he took it for granted that the prisoners had made a rush and gone. But that fear was quieted when the apostle said, "Do thyself no harm ; we are all here." What, then, was he afraid of? What was it that he desired to be saved from? Ah, the earthquake had shaken more than the prison-walls ! It had cracked the ground before him, and let him see the nether fires that were burning there. He had heard about the slave-girl that went through the streets of Philippi, pointing to Paul and Silas, and declaring that they were "the servants of the Most High God which showed . . . the way of salvation" ; and now this Most High God seemed to have come to the help of His servants ; and the gaoler felt himself brought face to face with an unknown power. The sleeping serpent in his conscience began to stir, and it was that which broke him down, hard and rough and harsh as he was, and made him grovel there before the prisoners whom he had been flogging an hour or two previously, with

THE QUESTION,

"What must I do to be saved?" Do you and I, dear friends, not need to ask that question quite as much as this heathen gaoler did?

Ah ! when a preacher looks at his audience, and feels the realities of our condition as sinful men, and knows how thick is the hide through which his

poor hand is trying to force the arrow of conviction, he feels impotent. How shall I get at men and women who know before I say it, everything that I have to say to them, and who treat it all lightly, as if it applied to somebody in another universe from themselves? What does salvation mean? It means the opposite of being lost, and unless you and I have laid hold of Jesus Christ we are lost. It means the opposite of being sick, and unless you and I have laid hold of Jesus Christ we are sick. It means the opposite of being in danger, and unless you and I have laid hold of Jesus Christ we are in danger.

Sick? Yes! I would not exaggerate. I have no doubt you are respectable, clean-living people, the great majority of you. Of course there are men and women here that have done hideously bad things; perhaps some that all the respectable Pharisees would turn up their noses at, and say, "This woman is a sinner"; and my message is to them as much as to others. But I want to get at you clean-living, respectable, law-abiding, whited sepulchres. There is plenty of whitewash on the outside. Yes, but go inside. Have you ever been down into the cellars of your own hearts, and taken with you this light: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and strength, and mind?" If you have, I know what you have seen, all manner of foul and creeping things. Dear brother,

it is not crimes that I charge you with, it is not even faults that I am bringing an indictment about, but it is something far deeper than either the one or the other, that "we all have sinned," because we have lived to ourselves so largely, and forgotten the God "in whose hands our breath is, and whose are all our ways." That is the sickness. Turn up a stone in any field, and what do you find below it? Ugly grey creatures that scuttle away as soon as the light strikes them. If you turn up the stones in your own hearts, you will see a swarm of creeping things that will hurry out of the light. I wonder if any man is trying to do it whilst I am speaking? God help you, dear friend, to see yourself! If the earthquake comes and lays bare to you, as I said, the nether fires, do not try to cover them over with a sheet of paper and hide them, but look until, like this man in our text, you cry out, "What must I do to be saved?"

I said that salvation was the opposite of danger, and is there not danger? Is not all sin full of misery, every moment that it lasts unforgiven? And is not there a future to reckon with? "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." There is an old Scottish song that runs—

Little she trowed
That the brewst she brewed
Would taste so bitterly.

You and I have to drink as we have brewed ; and to “appear . . . to give an account of the deeds done in the body.” So we need salvation—to be delivered from the sickness of sin, and to be delivered from the danger of death.

Now do not go away and shrug your shoulders, and say, “Oh! pulpit platitudes and rhetorical exaggerations.” There is a strange and awful power that we have of ignoring things that we do not like to remember ; and you are never so foolish as when you try to forget, or fling yourself into “business”—that is to say, making money—or into amusement, in order to escape from these thoughts. There are smiling little villages all round the base of Vesuvius, and the people sing and rejoice there ; and they tend their bits of vineyards, and never remember that those white wreaths of smoke from the cone at the top may any day darken, and the lava-flood creep down the sides and bury them. In the days of the old French Revolution, the aristocrats who were in the prisons, and were under sentence of death, used to get up entertainments in the evenings, where they had a ghastly mockery of feasting, and did the polite to one another, and sang their little songs, and danced their dances. And next morning the executioner’s men came down the corridors, and put the red mark on the doors of some that had been so merry the night before, and by midday the tumbrels

came, and the guillotine ended it all. Are there not many men and women whom I address that are trying, and perhaps trying now, to put away from them my poor words, by thinking about other things, and who are doing just as foolishly as those poor French nobles within arm's length of the axe?

There was an old Rabbi who said to his disciples, "A man should repent the day before he dies." His disciples said, "We do not know when we are going to die." Then said he, "Repent to-day." Let me put you a plain question: If you knew that to-morrow you were to stand before God's judgment seat, what would you do to-night? Do it.

And now let me say a word or two about THIS BLESSED ANSWER, which we may all receive, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

The question would have staggered a great many people if it had been put to them; and there would have been wonderfully elaborate and long-winded answers. But Paul was equal to the occasion, and as the whole anxiety of a soul was compressed into half a dozen words of question, so the whole hopes of the world were condensed into half a dozen more of answer. It came swift as the thunder with the lightning, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Some teachers would have

said : "Do as well as you can, and let bygones be bygones. Turn over a new leaf. Try to practise morality in the future, and it will be all right." But I need not enumerate what different authorities would have said. I am not going to trouble you with false or incomplete answers to the question. Here is *the* answer : "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." Now, here are two things, a certain act, "believe," and its object, "the Lord Jesus Christ." As to the latter, look at these two texts that I see upon the galleries here : "He shall save His people from their sins." Yes ; and why are we sure of that ? Why can I proclaim to all my brethren that great future, "He shall save His people" ? Because I know that great past, "Himself bare our sins." That is the bottom truth that this mission is trying to bring to sinful hearts that need it. It is the great gospel fact which was condensed in Paul's words, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." For if He is "Lord," that implies His sovereignty and, as I believe, His Divinity. If He is Jesus, that implies His Incarnation. If He is the Christ, that implies that He is the fulfilment of all the ancient dispensation of priest and sacrifice. And because Himself "bare our sins," therefore "He shall save His people from their sins" ; and each of us from ours.

Only, let me press on you as my last word this—

the condition that makes us "His people" is our faith. Paul did not say "Believe that Jesus Christ bore your sins." He did not only say, "Believe"; he said "believe on." And that is a very different matter. You may have the full-fledged orthodox faith that hosts of men profess to have, and yet you may not have a feather of the true trust which alone unites a man to Jesus Christ, and brings the blessing of Christ's salvation into a soul. Faith is not mere belief; faith is reliance. Sometimes, in the Old Testament, it is described by a word that means, "to fly to a refuge." Take that picture of a man with the avenger of blood at his heels, and his hot breath lifting his hair as the pursuer gains on him. In another moment the spear will be in his back. But he reaches the City of Refuge, and once across the threshold of its gate, the baffled pursuer retreats. Such is faith. Haste to the Refuge.

Faith is designated by another word which means hanging on to something. Imagine a man fallen into a pit, slimy, deep, dark, and full of creeping and ugly things. He sees coming down to him a rope; he clutches it and holds, and he is lifted up into the day. Such is faith. Fly to the Refuge. Clasp the rope.

You need salvation—to be saved from your sins and from their issues. There is but one way of

securing it ; God be thanked, the all-sufficient, the only way.

Nothing in my hand I bring ;
Simply to Thy cross I cling.

“Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.” That is all. It takes very little to be a Christian ; it takes an enormous deal to be a Christian. For it is a hard thing to see the simplicity of that great gospel message, and not to spoil everything by insisting on *our* having a finger in our own salvation. “It is only Heaven that is had for the asking. It is only God that is given away.”

“The gift of God is eternal life.” Dear friend, this gaoler was a heathen at sunset ; he was a Christian, rejoicing in God, long before the sun rose. People look askance at sudden conversions nowadays. I wish some of them knew a little more about what some of us know by experience in inquiry rooms and elsewhere. There are some things that are best done gradually, and there are some things that are best done suddenly. I suppose that almost all great resolutions, which change a life, have to be made suddenly, however long may have been the underground process of preparation. There has to be a leap at the last, though you may have had a run to prepare before you jump. At all events,

this I know, that there are men and women listening to me now, whose best—may I use the word?—*chance* if not whose only one of ever being Christians at all is that they shall be swept by the energy of a sudden resolution, to do that which they know that they ought to have done any time these long years, that is, to cast themselves on Jesus Christ, and cling to Him as their Saviour to the uttermost. “To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.”

God's Voice and Man's Echo

He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.—HEB. xiii. 5-6.

“**H**E hath said”; “we may . . . say.” So, then, here are two voices; or, rather, a voice and an echo—God's voice of promises, and man's answering voice of confidence. God speaks to us that we may speak to Him; and when He speaks His promises, the only fitting answer is to accept them as true in all their fulness and individual application, and to build on them a fixed confidence.

The writer quotes two passages as from the Old Testament. The first of them is not found *verbatim* anywhere there; the nearest approach to it, and obviously the source of the quotation, occurs in a connection that is worth noting. When Moses was handing over the charge of his people to his successor, Joshua, he said first to the people and then to Joshua, “Be strong and of a good courage. . . . He will not fail thee, neither forsake thee.”

The writer of the epistle falls back upon these words with a slight alteration and turns "He" into "I," simply because he recognised that when Moses spoke, God was speaking through him, and counter-signing with His own seal the promise which His servant made in His name. The other passage comes from the 118th Psalm. So, then, let us listen to the divine voice and the human answer.

I. GOD'S VOICE OF PROMISE.

"He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Now, notice there is a distinct parallel between the position of the people to whom this epistle was addressed, and that of the Hebrews to whom the original promise was made. The latter were standing on the verge of a great change. They were passing from under the leadership of Moses, and going under the leadership of the untried Joshua. Is it fanciful to recall that Joshua and Jesus are the same name; and that the difficulty which Israel on the borders of Canaan had to face, and the difficulty which these Hebrew Christians had to encounter, were similar, being in each case a change of leaders—the ceasing to look to Moses and the beginning to take commands from another? To men in such a crisis, when venerable authority was becoming antiquated, it might seem as if nothing was stable. Very appropriate, therefore, and strong was the encouragement

given by pointing away from the flowing river to the Rock of Ages, rising changeless above the changing current of human life. So Moses said to his generation, and the author of the epistle says after him to his contemporaries—you may change the leaders, but you keep the one Presence.

This letter goes on the principle throughout that everything which belonged to Israel, in the way of institutions, sacred persons, promises, is handed over to the Christian Church, and we are, as it were, served heirs to the whole of these. So, then, to every one of us the message comes, and comes in its most individual aspect, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Now, "to leave" and "to forsake" are identical, and the promise, if we keep to the Authorised Version, is a repetition, in the two clauses, of the same thought. But whilst the two clauses are substantially identical, there is a very beautiful variation in the form in which the one assurance is given in them. With regard to the first of them, "I will never leave thee," both in the Hebrew and in the Greek the word which is employed, and which is translated "leave," means the withdrawing of a hand that sustains. And so the Revised Version wisely substitutes for "leave thee," "I will never fail thee." We might even put it more colloquially, and approach more nearly the original expression, if we said, "He will never drop thee";

never let His hand slacken, never withdraw its sustaining power, but will communicate for ever, day by day, not only the strength, but the conscious security that comes from feeling that great, strong, gentle hand, closing thee round and keeping thee tight. No man "shall pluck them out of My Father's hand." "The Lord upholdeth all that fall," says one Psalm, and another of the psalmists puts it even more picturesquely: "When I said my foot slippeth, Thy mercy, O Lord, held me up." To say "*my* foot slippeth," with a strong emphasis on the "*my*," is the sure way to be able to say the other thing: "Thy mercy held me up." "He shall not fall, for the Lord is able to make him stand." Suppose a man on some slippery glacier, not accustomed to ice-work, as he feels his foot going out from under him, he gets nervous, and nervousness means a fall, and a fall means disaster and sometimes death. So he grips the guide's hand, and then he can walk. There is Peter, out on the sea that he had presumptuously asked leave to walk on, and as he feels the cold water coming above his ankle, and sees it rising higher and higher, he begins to fear, and his fear makes him heavier, so that he sinks the faster, till the very extremity of need and paroxysm of terror strike out a spark of faith, and faith and fear are strangely blended in the cry: "Lord, save me." Christ's outstretched hand answered the cry, and its

touch held Peter up, made him buoyant again, and as he rose, the water seemed to sink beneath his feet, and on that heaving pavement, glistening in the moonlight, he walked till he was helped into the boat again. So will God do for us, if we will, for He has said: "I will never relax My grasp. Nothing shall ever come between My hand and thine." When a nurse or a mother is holding a child's hand, her grip slackens unless it is perpetually repeated by fresh nervous tension. So all human helps tend to become less helpful, and all human love has its limits. But God's hand never slackens its grip, and we may be sure that, as He has grasped He will hold, and "keep that which we have committed unto Him."

But mark the other form of the promise. "I will never drop thee"—that promises the communication of sustaining strength according to our need; "nor forsake thee"—that is the same promise, in another shape. The tottering limbs need to be held up. The lonely heart walking the way of life, lonely after all companionship, and which has depths that the purest human love cannot sound, and sometimes dark secrets that it durst not admit the dearest to behold—that heart may have a Divine companion. Here is a word for the solitary, and we are all solitary. Some of us, more plainly than others, are called upon to walk a lonely road in a great darkness, and to live

lives little apprehended, little sympathised with, by others, or perchance having for our best companion, next to God, the memories of those that are beside us no more. Moses died, Joshua took his place; but behind the dying Moses—buried in his unknown grave, and left far away as the files crossed the Jordan—and behind the living Joshua, there was the Lord who liveth for ever. “I will not forsake thee.” Dear ones go, and take half our hearts with them. People misunderstand us. We feel that we dare not open out our whole selves to any. We feel that, just as scientists tell us that no two atoms of the most solid body are in actual juxtaposition, but that there is a film of air between them, and hence all bodies are more or less elastic, if sufficient pressure be applied, so after the closest companionship there is a film. But that film makes no separation between us and God. “I will not drop thee”—there is the strength according to our need. “I will not forsake thee,” there is companionship in all our solitude.

But do not let us forget that all God's promises have conditions appended, and that this one has its conditions like all the rest. Was not the history of Israel a contradiction of that glowing promise which was given them before they crossed the Jordan? Does the Jew to-day look as if he belonged to a nation that God would never leave nor forsake? Certainly not. And why? Simply because God's

promise of not dropping us, and of never leaving us, is contingent upon our not dropping Him, and of our never leaving Him. "No man shall pluck them out of My Father's hand." No; but they can wriggle themselves out of their Father's hand. They can break the communion; they can separate themselves, and bring a film, not of impalpable and pure atmosphere, but of poisonous gases, between themselves and God. And God who, according to the grand old legend, before the Roman soldier flung his torch into the Holy of Holies, and "burnt up the beautiful house where our fathers praised Him with fire," was heard saying, "Let us depart hence," does say sometimes, when a man has gone away from Him, "I will go and return to My place until they seek Me. In their affliction, they will seek Me early."

And now let me say a word about the second voice that sounds here.

II. THE HUMAN ANSWER, OR THE ECHO OF THE DIVINE VOICE.

If God speaks to me, He waits for me to speak to Him. My answer should be immediate, and my answer should embrace as true all that He has said to me, and my answer should build upon His great faithful promise a great triumphant confidence. Do we speak to God in the strain in which He speaks to us? When He says, "I will," do our hearts leap up with joyful confidence, and answer, "Thou

dost" ? Do we take all His promises for our trust, or do we meet His firm assurance with a feeble, faltering faith? We turn God's "verily" into a peradventure, often, and at best when He says to us "I will," we doubtfully say "perhaps He may." That is the kind of faith, even at its highest, with which the best of us meet this great promise, building frail tabernacles on the Rock of Ages and putting shame on God's faithfulness by our faithlessness. "He hath said," and then He pauses and listens, whether we are going to say anything in answer, and whether when He promises: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," we are bold to say, "the Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man can do unto me."

Now, I do not suppose that I am keeping too slavishly to the mere words of the text if I ask you to look at the beautiful sequence of thought in these three clauses which make the response of the man to the Divine promise. There is a kind of throb of wonder in that word. "The Lord is my helper." That is the answer of faith to the Divine promise, grasping it, never hesitating about it, laying it upon the heart, or on the fevered forehead like a cooling leaf, to subdue the hot pulsations there. And then what comes next? "I will not fear." We have the power of controlling our apprehension of peril, but it is of no use to screw ourselves up to a fictitious

courage which consists mainly in the ostrich's wisdom of hiding its head from the danger, and in saying, "Who is afraid?" Unless we can say "the Lord is my helper," it is folly to say, "I will not be afraid, I will brace myself up, and be courageous to meet these difficulties." That is all right, but it is *not* all right, unless we have laid the right foundation for courage. Having our purged ears opened to hear the great, strong, sweet Divine promise, we are able to coerce our terrors, and to banish them from our minds by the assurance that, whatever comes, God is with us. "The Lord is my helper"—that is the foundation, and built upon that—and madness unless it is built upon it—is the courage which says to all my fears, "Down, down, you are not to get the mastery over me." "I will trust," says the psalmist, "and not be afraid." Faith is the antagonist to fear, because faith grasps the fact of the Divine promise.

Now, there is another thought which may come in here since it is suggested by the context, and that is, that the recognition of God thus, as always with us to sustain us, makes all earthly conditions tolerable. The whole of my text is given as the ground of the exhortation: "Be content with such things as ye have," for He hath said, "I will never leave thee." If Thou dost not leave me, then such things as I have are enough for me, and if Thou

has gone away, no things that I merely have are of much good to me.

And then comes the last stage in our answer to what God says, which is better represented by a slight variation in translation, putting the last words of my text as a question: "What can man do unto me?" It is safe to look at men and things, and their possibly calamitous action upon our outward lives, when we have done the other two things, grasped God and rested in faith on Him. If we begin with what ought to come last, and look first at what man can do unto us, then fear will surge over us, as it ought to do. But if we follow the order of faith, and start with God's promise, grapple that to our heart, and put down with strong hand the craven dread that coils round our hearts, then we can look out with calm eyes upon all the appearances that may threaten evil, and say, "Come one, come all, my foot is on the Rock of Ages, and my back is against it. No man can touch me." So "we may boldly say, What can man do unto me?"

